

BYZANTINE IDENTITY AND ITS PATRONS: EMBROIDERED AËRES AND
EPITAPHIOI OF THE PALAIOLOGAN AND POST-BYZANTINE PERIODS

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Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 6, 2009

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Abstract

Henry Schilb

BYZANTINE IDENTITY AND ITS PATRONS: EMBROIDERED AĒRES AND EPITAPHIOI OF THE PALAIOLOGAN AND POST-BYZANTINE PERIODS

In the Orthodox Christian tradition, an epitaphios is a liturgical veil used during Holy Week to represent Christ in the tomb. An aër is a type of textile used to cover the vessels containing the Eucharistic bread and wine on the altar during the Divine Liturgy. The form and function of the epitaphios developed from the form and function of the aër. Just when these two types of liturgical textile became completely distinct is something that scholars have yet to determine, and it is doubtful that we can deduce a precise function for any extant example of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries solely from its iconography. Careful study of the iconography embroidered on early aères and epitaphioi confirms that these veils developed as expressions of the theology behind the rites in which those textiles were used. Analyzing iconography, style, and inscriptions, however, reveals less about how any aër or epitaphios fits into the development of these types of textiles than it reveals about the concerns of the patrons and embroiderers at the time and place when each textile was made.

Iconography is not the only evidence for the meaning and functions of liturgical textiles. Early texts reveal that aères and epitaphioi might have had flexible functions well into the sixteenth century. Sources for the special terms applied to liturgical textiles include the inscriptions on the textiles themselves, which scholars have sometimes overlooked. The inscriptions provide some of the most promising evidence for understanding the functions of these liturgical textiles. Combining embroidered images

and embroidered inscriptions, aëres and epitaphioi also carried messages other than their most obvious theological meanings. Aëres and epitaphioi have been useful sites for the display of a patron's Orthodox Christian identity. Some patrons, including Byzantine emperors, grand princes of Moscow, and Moldavian voivodes, used aëres and epitaphioi to identify themselves with a specifically Byzantine legacy even after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire. This study includes a catalogue of all known, extant aëres and epitaphioi of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Contents

Part I: The Functions and Development of Aëres and Epitaphioi	1
Introduction	1
1. Aëres and Epitaphioi	1
2. State of Scholarship	7
3. Research Questions and Methodology	14
Chapter 1: Terms	20
Chapter 2: Function and Iconography	56
Chapter 3: Geographical Distribution	113
1. Iconography and Style	113
2. Workshops and Techniques	141
3. A Proposal for Further Research	157
Chapter 4: Messages of Aëres and Epitaphioi	168
1. Aëres, Epitaphioi, and Patrons	170
2. Byzantium after Byzantium	189
3. R. F. Borrough and Burton Y. Berry	201
Conclusions	214
Part II: A Catalogue of Aëres and Epitaphioi (ca. 1300 to 1506)	219
Appendix A: The Shroud of Turin	494
Appendix B: Tables	509
Appendix C: R. F. Borrough's "A Recent Visit to Nicæa"	520
Bibliography	525
Illustrations	577

List of Illustrations

For practical reasons I have arranged all the illustrations of the catalogue entries together as figures 1 through 82. The other figures appear in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.

Figure 1. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked ca. 1900 before it disappeared.

Figure 2. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked in 1995 by which time it had resurfaced in Sophia, Bulgaria.

Figure 3. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked in 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* in New York.

Figure 4. The kalymma that had been used to repair the lower left corner of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos.

Figure 5. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin.

Figure 6. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Detail of the head of Christ.

Figure 7. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Detail of the lower part of the composition with the inscription.

Figure 8. Catalogue Number 3. The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos. The Art Museum of Princeton University.

Figure 9. Catalogue Number 3. The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos. Detail of the head of Christ.

Figure 10. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.

Figure 11. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail of the left panel.

Figure 12. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail of the right panel.

Figure 13. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail—the center panel.

Figure 14. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the deacon-angels in the center panel.

Figure 15. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the lamenting angels in the center panel.

Figure 16. Catalogue Number 5. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Agios Athanasios.

Figure 17. Catalogue Number 6. The Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (Chilandar 1), black and white.

Figure 18. Catalogue Number 6. The Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (Chilandar 1), color.

Figure 19. Catalogue Number 7. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos.

Figure 20. Catalogue Number 7. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos. Detail showing the inscription at Christ's feet and the Vatopedi monogram in the border.

Figure 21. Catalogue Number 8. The Aër-Epitaphios at the Pantokrator Monastery.

Figure 22. Catalogue Number 9. The Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis.

Figure 23. Catalogue Number 10. The Aër-Epitaphios at the Stavronikita Monastery.

Figure 24. Catalogue Number 11. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Bachkovo Monastery.

Figure 25. Catalogue Number 12. The San Marco Aër-Epitaphios.

Figure 26. Catalogue Number 13. The Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites from Glavenica and Berat, Albania, black and white.

Figure 27. Catalogue Number 13. The Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites, color.

Figure 28. Catalogue Number 13. Albanian postage stamps with the Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites.

Figure 29. Catalogue Number 14. The Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia.

Figure 30. Catalogue Number 15. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Cozia Monastery, Wallachia.

- Figure 31. Catalogue Number 15. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Cozia Monastery, detail showing the deacon-angel on the right holding a rhipidion and the pastoral staff held by the next deacon-angel to the right.
- Figure 32. Catalogue Number 16a. The “umbrella” of the Veronica Ciborium from Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. Lat. 8494, f. 130.
- Figure 33. Catalogue Number 16a. The “umbrella” of the Veronica Ciborium from Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., f. 121r.
- Figure 34. Catalogue Number 16b. The Vatican Aër-Epitaphios as illustrated in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Arch. S. Pietro H. 3.
- Figure 35. Catalogue Number 16b. The Vatican Aër-Epitaphios as illustrated in Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., f. 123r.
- Figure 36. Catalogue Number 17. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia.
- Figure 37. Catalogue Number 18. The Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios Heracleia.
- Figure 38. Catalogue Number 19. The Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos (Chilandar 2).
- Figure 39. Catalogue Number 20. The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I, from the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery as it looked with the surviving parts of the original mounted on a light-colored, patterned backing cloth.
- Figure 40. Catalogue Number 20. The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I, from the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery, as it looks now.
- Figure 41. Catalogue Number 21. The Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes.
- Figure 42. Catalogue Number 21. The Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes, engraving from Cajetan M. Capycius [Gaetano Maria Capece], *De vestustis altaris pallio ecclesiae graecae christianorum ex cimeliario clericorum regularium theatinorum domus SS. Apollolorum Neapolis: Diatriba*. Naples: Valentinus Azzolinus, 1756. Accordion-fold engraving between pages 8 and 9.
- Figure 43. Catalogue Number 22. The Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk.
- Figure 44. Catalogue Number 23. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios.
- Figure 45. Catalogue Number 24. An Aër-Epitaphios from Novgorod (Novgorod 12).

- Figure 46. Catalogue Number 25. The Great Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal.
- Figure 47. Catalogue Number 26. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios, from the Żółkiew Monastery.
- Figure 48. Catalogue Number 27. The Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina.
- Figure 49. Catalogue Number 27. The Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina, detail of the lower right quarter.
- Figure 50. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamţ Monastery.
- Figure 51. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamţ Monastery, detail of the left side showing the Virgin and Christ's head.
- Figure 52. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamţ Monastery, detail of the right side showing Mary Magdalene.
- Figure 53. Catalogue Number 29. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuţi.
- Figure 54. Catalogue Number 30. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios, from the Monastery of Puchezhsk.
- Figure 55. Catalogue Number 31. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery.
- Figure 56. Catalogue Number 32. The Aër-Epitaphios of King George VIII.
- Figure 57. Catalogue Number 33. The Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka.
- Figure 58. Catalogue Number 34. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod.
- Figure 59. Catalogue Number 35. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum.
- Figure 60. Catalogue Number 35. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, detail showing Joseph of Arimathea.
- Figure 61. Catalogue Number 37. The Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin.
- Figure 62. Catalogue Number 37. Detail of the right side of the Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin.
- Figure 63. Catalogue Number 38 (Patmos 1). Aër-Epitaphios from the Patmos Monastery.

- Figure 64. Catalogue Number 39 (Patmos 2). Aër-Epithaphios from the Patmos Monastery.
- Figure 65. Catalogue number 41. The Putna Aër (Tafrali 65). Erroneously illustrated as “85” in Oreste Tafrali’s *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925), figure 85.
- Figure 66. Catalogue number 42. Aër-Epithaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței.
- Figure 67. Catalogue number 43. The Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan.
- Figure 68. Catalogue number 43. The Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan, detail of the right side.
- Figure 69. Catalogue number 44. The Aër-Epithaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery.
- Figure 70. Catalogue number 44. The Aër-Epithaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery, detail in color showing the different couching patterns in the halos of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.
- Figure 71. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery.
- Figure 72. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the face of the figure standing behind the Virgin.
- Figure 73. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the group of angels in the zone above Christ.
- Figure 74. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the group of angels in the zone below Christ.
- Figure 75. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the name “ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ” (Alexander) in the upper left corner of the border inscription.
- Figure 76. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the date in the upper right corner of the border inscription.
- Figure 77. Catalogue number 46. An Aër-Epithaphios of the Novgorod School in the State Historical Museum, Moscow.
- Figure 78. Catalogue number 47. The Aër-Epithaphios of Manuel Ambaratopoulos.

Figure 79. Catalogue number 48. The Aër-Epitaphios in the Schloss Autenried Icon Museum, Ichenhausen, Germany.

Figure 80. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery.

Figure 81. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery, detail showing the landscape in the zone below Christ.

Figure 82. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery, detail showing the faces of the figures at Christ's feet.

Figure 83. Painted Epitaphios. 170 x 120 cm. Dečani Monastery, Kosovo. Sixteenth Century?

Figure 84. Painted and embroidered epitaphios made in the area of Butoi, Romania. 136 x 110. Monastery of St. Stephen, Meteora, Greece. 1857.

Figure 85. The Antimension of Bishop George Gennadius Bizancij. From the Episcopal and Heritage Institute Libraries of the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Passaic, New Jersey. 33.8 x 41.2. 1718.

Figure 86. Antimension. 45 x 58.5. Stavronikita, Mount Athos. 1717.

Figure 87. Antimension. 42 x 54.5. Simonopetra, Mount Athos. Sixteenth Century.

Figure 88. The front of The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17.

Figure 89. The back of The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17.

Figure 90. The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17. Detail of the front showing the portrait of the Metropolitan Photios.

Figure 91. The Nun Jefimija. Katapetasma for the Royal Doors of the Chilandar Monastery Katholikon, Mount Athos. 118 x 144 cm. 1399.

Figure 92. Kalymma. 71 x 76. Benaki Museum (Benaki 9371). 1664.

Figure 93. Diskokalymma. Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany (88). 1185–95.

Figure 94. Poterokalymma. Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany (87). 1185–95.

Figure 95. Silver Paten from Riha. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, DC. Sixth century.

- Figure 96. Epitaphios from Wallachia. 70 x 54.5 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.
- Figure 97. Epitaphios from Wallachia as it looked ca. 1972 before conservation. 81.3 x 66 cm (including the cloth on which the epitaphios was mounted). Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.
- Figure 98. Detail of an Epitaphios from Wallachia showing metal-wrapped thread couched over a coarse cord. 700 x 540 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.
- Figure 99. Epitaphios from Wallachia. Detail showing metal-wrapped silk thread. 700 x 540 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.
- Figure 100. Poterokalymma showing the Virgin (Meter Theou) and Christ. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.
- Figure 101. Diskokalymma showing the Melismos. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.
- Figure 102. Aër showing the figure of Christ as Amnos. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.
- Figure 103. Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the nave in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now Saint Kliment), Ohrid. 1295.
- Figure 104. Epitaphios. 76 x 50 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens. (Benaki 33726). 1776.
- Figure 105. The Aër-Epitaphios carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession in the Divine Liturgy. Eighteenth-century fresco painted by George Markou at the Holy Monastery of Kaisariane, Athens.
- Figure 106. Angels with kalymmata and an aër at the front of the Great Entrance procession in the Divine Liturgy. Eighteenth-century fresco painted by George Markou at the Holy Monastery of Kaisariane, Athens.
- Figure 107. The front of the Great Entrance procession from the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos. Ca. 1568. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 219.3.
- Figure 108. The aër carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession from the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos. Ca. 1568. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris:

Librarie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 218.2.

Figure 109. Wall painting on the South wall of the bema in the Saint Nicholas church at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos showing the leading figures of the Great Entrance. 1560.

Figure 110. Wall painting on the North wall of the bema in the Saint Nicholas church at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos showing the figures carrying the great aër in Great Entrance. 1560.

Figure 111. Divine Liturgy in the dome of the Chilandar Katholikon. Thirteenth century or fourteenth century. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Librarie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 64.1.

Figure 112. Wall paintings on the north wall of the naos in Hagioi Anargyroi, Kastoria, Greece. The Entombment can be seen in the center of the north wall. Ca. 1100.

Figure 113. Wall painting of the Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the naos in St. Pantalaïmon, Nerezi. 1164.

Figure 114. The Melismos in the north apse of the Markov Monastery, Serbia. Fourteenth Century.

Figure 115. The Melismos at the Church of St. George, Kurbinovo. Late Twelfth Century.

Figure 116. The Melismos in the Church of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki. Early Fourteenth Century.

Figure 117. Melismos Aër. 68 x 60 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens. Late Sixteenth Century.

Figure 118. Diptych of the Lamenting Virgin (left) and the Akra Tapeinosis (right). From the Monastery of the Transfiguration, Meteora, Greece. Late Fourteenth Century?

Figure 119. Ostension of the Turin Shroud in 1931. From Paul Vignon's *Le saint suaire de Turin, devant la science, l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'iconographie, la logique*, (Paris: Masson, 1938). Photograph on page 10.

Figure 120. Turin Shroud. Half of the shroud showing the front of the figure. From Paul Vignon's *Le saint suaire de Turin, devant la science, l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'iconographie, la logique*, (Paris: Masson, 1938). Photograph on plate II.

Figure 121. Composite Reliquary at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Figure 122. Detail of the composite reliquary showing a twelfth-century enamel. From

the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Figure 123. Wall paintings in the sanctuary of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki showing the Mandyllion above the apse. The Melismos is visible between the concelebrating bishops. Ca. 1310–20.

Figure 124. Field Banner of the Bulgarian army during World War I. The banner is decorated with the image of the Mandyllion. From Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Edmund Jephcott, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), page 219, figure 132.

Figure 125. Christ lying on a shroud. Wall painting in the apse of the Church of Zoodochos Pege, Samari, Messenia, Greece. Late twelfth century.

Figure 126. Epitaphios or Antimension from Asia Minor. 54 x 30 cm. Benaki Museum (34680). Sixteenth Century.

Figure 127. Aër-Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery. 1545.

Figure 128. “Ἡ Ἀποκαθήλωσις” (The Deposition) and “Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος Θρήνος” (The Lamentation) from the north wall (facing south), just south of the north conch, among the 1568 cycle of wall paintings in the Katholikon of Dochiariou, Mount Athos.

Figure 129. “Ὁ Ἐνταφιασμός” (The Entombment) from the west wall (facing east) of the north conch, among the 1568 cycle of wall paintings in the Katholikon of Dochiariou, Mount Athos.

Figure 130. Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the nave in the Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș, Wallachia. Fourteenth Century.

Figure 131. Epitaphios Threnos and Entombment on the north wall of the nave in the Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș, Wallachia. Fourteenth Century.

Figure 132. Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino from the Cotroceni Monastery, with both the Deposition and the Epitaphios Threnos. 1679/80. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.

Figure 133. Epitaphios from the Troize-Sergiiiev Monastery. 276 x 174 cm. Zagorsk Museum. 1560/1.

Figure 134. Epitaphios from the Church of Saint George at the Monastery of Peta near Arta. 161 x 118 cm. Athens Museum of Decorative Art. 1637 or 1647 (ΑΧΛΖ' or ΑΧΔΖ').

Figure 135. Epitaphios embroidered by Despoineta. 150 x 112 cm. Benaki Museum

(33604). 1682.

Figure 136. Kokona tou Rologa. Epitaphios. Benaki Museum, Athens. 1829.

Figure 137. The Epitaphios of Demetrios and Atalia. Canterbury Cathedral. Eighteenth Century?

Figure 138. Detail of the Epitaphios of Demetrios and Atalia showing the center panel. Canterbury Cathedral. Eighteenth Century?

Figure 139. Epitaphios designed by Christopher Žefarović. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. 1752.

Figure 140. Aër-Epitaphios. 38 x 28.5 cm. Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos. 1595.

Figure 141. Epitaphios of Queen Mariam (ca. 1632/33–1680/82). 159 x 111 cm. Georgian National Museum, Tblisi. Seventeenth Century.

Figure 142. Epitaphios of Bagrat III (1510–65). 267 x 158 cm. Georgian National Museum, Tblisi. Sixteenth Century.

Figure 143. Divine Liturgy in the dome of the katholikon at the Gelati Monastery, Georgia. Seventeenth Century.

Figure 144. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. 54.9 x 42.5. Treasure of the Patriarchate, Peć. Seventeenth Century.

Figure 145. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. 69 x 27.7. Ecclesiastical Museum, Thera. Ca. 1500.

Figure 146. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. From the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, Wallachia. The National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. Sixteenth Century.

Figure 147. Detail of the icon of the Epitaphios Threnos from the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, Wallachia. The National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. Sixteenth Century.

Figure 148. Epitaphios of John, son of Argir and husband of Helen. Embroidered by Roxanda. Treasury of Putna Monastery, Romania. (Tafrali's Putna 68). May 10, 1738.

Figure 149. The left side of the fresco painting of the Epitaphios Threnos from the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Mistra. Fourteenth Century.

Figure 150. Gabriel Millet's line drawing of the fresco painting of the Epitaphios Threnos

from the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Mistra. Fourteenth Century. From Gabriel Millet. *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), plate 122, 4.

Figure 151. Aër of the Voivode Neagoe Bășărab, from the Cathedral of Argeș. 207.5 x 161. Kremlin Museums, Moscow (TK-50). 1517–1519.

Figure 152. The podea of Voivode Vlad Vintilă. Wallachian Embroidery at the Koutloumisiou Monastery, Mount Athos. Ca. 1533.

Figure 153. Epitaphios worked by Despoineta and Alexandra. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 1712.

Figure 154. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the figure of Christ on the reverse of the center panel.

Figure 155. Communion of the Apostles (top) and Concelebrating Fathers (bottom). Fresco in the bema of the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now the Church of St. Kliment), Ohrid. 1295.

Figure 156. Embroidered Veil Illustrating the Transfiguration and Church Festivals from the Belozersk Monastery. 49 x 51.8 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg. Late Fifteenth Century.

Figure 157. Detail of the Embroidered Veil Illustrating the Transfiguration and Church Festivals from the Belozersk Monastery. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg. Late fifteenth century.

Figure 158. Couching Patterns.

Figure 159. Catalogue Number 19. Detail of the Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos (Chilandar 2) showing couching patterns in the halos.

Figure 160. The Nun Ephemias. Pall embroidered with the “Laud to Prince Lazar.” 49 x 69 cm. Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade. Ca. 1402.

Figure 161. Curtain or hanging with the Crucifixion. 138 x 126 cm. Putna Monastery Museum, Romania. 1500.

Figure 162. Donor portrait of Ștefan cel Mare. Detail of the curtain or hanging with the Crucifixion. Putna Monastery Museum, Romania. 1500.

Figure 163. Tomb Cover of Maria Mangop. 102 x 188 cm. Treasury of Putna Monastery, Romania. Ca. 1477.

Figure 164. The Aër-Epitaphios of Gabriel Trotroushan. 210 x 165 cm. Putna Monastery,

Romania. 1516.

Figure 165. Ciborium of the Veronica according to Giacomo Grimaldi. *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veratione asservatis*. Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 (1618), f. 34.

Figure 166. Woodcut showing the “Ostension of the Sudarium” from *Mirabilis Urbis Romae*, 1481.

Figure 167. Woodcut showing the “Ostension of the Sudarium” from *Mirabilis Urbis Romae*, 1511.

Figure 168. The Aër-Epitaphios of Vasile Lupu from The Three Hierarchs Monastery, Iași. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. 1638.

Figure 169. Communion of the Apostles in the bema of Saint Sophia, Kiev. Ca. 1046.

Figure 170. Portraits of Alexandru cel Bun (left) and Marina (right) on the early fifteenth-century Epitrachelion of Staraya-Lagoda.

Figure 171. Detail of the Aër-Epitaphios the Princes Marina showing the omega at the beginning of the inscription.

Figure 172. Detail of the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios showing an omega from the lower border.

Figure 173. Poterokalymma identified by Oreste Tafrali as Putna 83 in *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).

Figure 174. Diskokalymma identified by Oreste Tafrali as Putna 84 in *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).

Figure 175. Icon of the Entombment. 63 x 91 cm. Ostroukhov Collection, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Late Fifteenth Century.

Abbreviations

<i>BCMI</i>	<i>Buletinul comisiunii monumentelor istorice</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques</i>
<i>CRAI</i>	<i>Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
<i>DChAE</i>	<i>Deltion tes Christianikes Archaialogikes Etaireias</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EEBS</i>	<i>Epeteris Etaireias Byzantineon Spoudeon</i>
<i>EpChron</i>	<i>Epeiotika Chronika</i>
<i>GlasSND</i>	<i>Glasnik Skopsko naučno društva</i>
<i>ODB</i>	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> . Ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, et al. 3 volumes. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
<i>OrChrAn</i>	<i>Orientalia christiana analecta</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca</i> . Ed. J.-P. Migne. 161 volumes in 166 parts. Paris: 1857–1866.
<i>PI</i>	<i>Problemi na Izkustvoto</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> . Ed. R. Graffin, F. Nau. Paris: 1904–.
<i>RBK</i>	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i>
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
<i>RRHA</i>	<i>Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art</i>
<i>ThEE</i>	<i>Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopaideia</i>

Part I: The Functions and Development of Aëres and Epitaphioi

Introduction:

1. Aëres and Epitaphioi

In this study I will discuss two types of Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles: the aër and the epitaphios. I have concentrated on Byzantine and post-Byzantine examples made during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The aër is a type of textile that covers the Eucharistic gifts on the altar after the Great Entrance.¹ The plural of “aër” is “aëres.” An epitaphios is a type of textile displayed on a table or portable bier in the naos of a church on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.² The epitaphios is also carried in procession on Holy Saturday. The plural of “epitaphios” is “epitaphioi.” As Pauline Johnstone has noted, the epitaphios can also be called the “Epitaphios Sindon.”³ The aër is usually decorated with an image of Christ as Amnos (i.e. the Lamb), in which Christ is presented as the sacrificed offering. The epitaphios is usually decorated with iconography identified as the Epitaphios Threnos (the Lamentation at the Tomb). Most scholars agree that the form and function of the epitaphios developed from the form and function of the aër. I have three main goals in this study: to discuss the development of the liturgical functions of aëres and epitaphioi and to determine whether we can deduce from the evidence when they became separate types of liturgical textiles; to discuss whether patrons might have used aëres and epitaphioi as sites for messages about themselves; and to present a

¹ Anna Gonosová, “Aer,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 27; Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Second ed., vol. 200, *OrChrAn* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1975), 5–7.

² Anna Gonosová, “Epitaphios,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 720; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 217–19.

³ Pauline Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), 130.

catalogue of the known aëres and epitaphioi made between the late thirteenth century and 1506.

Conventional wisdom holds that epitaphioi developed from aëres.⁴ This is almost certainly the case. For the period that I discuss, however, some of these objects are not clearly of either type, and one of the main purposes of this study is to discover whether we can determine when the differentiation between the aër and the epitaphios took place. Some extant examples may represent a transitional type of textile that could have been used as an aër or as an epitaphios or as both. For examples that might have been used as both, or for which we cannot determine exactly how they were intended to be used, I have adopted the term “aër-epitaphios.” These and other terms are discussed more fully in Chapter 1. There are forty-nine textiles listed in my catalogue, not all of them extant (see figures 1 through 82). The end date for my catalogue (1506) is the date of the last aër or epitaphios that can be associated with the patronage of the Moldavian voivode Ștefan cel Mare, one of the great patrons of liturgical textiles in the post-Byzantine period. The importance of Ștefan cel Mare as a patron is discussed in Chapter 4.

The types of textiles considered here belong to the broad category of church vestments, which can be divided into subcategories. Pauline Johnstone divided vestments into “hierarchical vestments,” “priestly insignia,” “liturgical vestments,” and “church furnishings.”⁵ Hierarchical vestments are the garments worn by the clergy, such as the miter or the tunic-like sakkos. Priestly insignia are smaller textiles that identify the station of each member of the clergy, such as the oraria worn by deacons. Liturgical vestments

⁴ Gonosová, “Epitaphios,” 720; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216–19.

⁵ Johnstone’s book is one of the most commonly cited English-language reference works on the subject of Byzantine embroidery. Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 129–30.

are those cloths used by the clergy the performance of the liturgy, such as the aër, which is one of the subjects of this study. A related type of liturgical vestment is the kalymma. Kalymmata are textiles that cover the Eucharistic offerings during the Great Entrance.⁶ The Great Entrance is the procession during which the Eucharistic offerings are transferred to the altar. At the end of the Great Entrance, the kalymmata are removed and the aër is placed over both the bread and the wine. A type of liturgical textile that is sometimes mistaken for the aër is the antimimension. An antimimension is a portable cloth altar that superseded the eiliton.⁷ I refer to the antimimension as a “cloth altar” rather than as an “altar cloth” because this type of cloth is the consecrated altar itself, whether the antimimension covers a makeshift altar or a more permanent structure. The antimimension is related to the aër and the epitaphios in that all three types can be decorated with an image of the dead Christ, especially a scene of the Epitaphios Threnos, but the functions of the three types are quite different. Johnstone’s fourth category of vestment, church furnishings, includes the curtains (katapetasmata) that hang in the iconostasis. Maria Theocharis and other scholars have divided vestments into similar categories.⁸ The main distinction among these categories has to do with whether or not the objects are worn by the clergy. For those textiles that are not worn, we can make a further distinction between textiles that may be considered strictly ornamental and textiles that are actually placed on the altar or carried in procession during the performance of the liturgy. The aër and the epitaphios fall into this last category, called “liturgical textiles” by both Johnstone and Theocharis.

⁶ Anna Gonosová, “Kalymma,” in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1097.

⁷ Anna Gonosová, “Antimimension,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 112.

⁸ Maria Theocharis, *Ekklesiastika Chrysokenteta* (Athens: Apostolike Diakonia tes Ekklesias tes Ellados, 1986), 14–30.

That aëres and epitaphioi are embroidered textiles is relevant to their function and significance as objects used in the performance of the liturgy, but embroidery as a medium is not my primary interest in these objects. Although I have discussed embroidery techniques in Chapter 3, I am more concerned with iconography and inscriptions. My goal in studying iconography and inscriptions is to understand what aëres and epitaphioi meant to the patrons who paid for them, the clergy who used them, and the congregations who encountered them during the Great Entrance and Holy Week. There are examples of aëres and epitaphioi that were painted rather than embroidered, but the extant examples post-date the period covered in the catalogue in Part II. A painted epitaphios at the Dečani Monastery, for example, is an important work of post-Byzantine art in Kosovo (figure 83).⁹ Dušan Tasić proposed a very early date for the Dečani Epitaphios on stylistic grounds, assigning it to the fourteenth century.¹⁰ Style is not necessarily our best guide, however, and the iconography of the Dečani Epitaphios suggests that it belongs to the sixteenth century. I have, therefore, excluded the Dečani Epitaphios from my catalogue because of its date, not because it was painted rather than embroidered. That iconography is a better guide than style in dating aëres and epitaphioi is a matter that I have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

We might assume that some aëres and epitaphioi, more than have survived, were painted rather than embroidered for practical reasons. Embroidery is an expensive and time-consuming medium. Part of the expense would have been due to the materials involved, usually silk thread, gold wire, or silk thread wrapped in gold or silver foil. We

⁹ Gojko Subotić, *Art of Kosovo the Sacred Land* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 80.

¹⁰ Dušan Tasić, “Hvostanska Plaštanitsa,” *Starinar* 13–14 (1962–1963): 161.

can also deduce from an inscription that at least one large embroidered epitaphios took a long time to execute. The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80) tells us that it was commissioned by Ștefan cel Mare but only completed during the reign of Ștefan cel Mare's successor, which suggests that it could take as long as two years to complete such a large embroidered textile. There might be other explanations for the long time it took to complete the Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery. Work might have been interrupted, for example, but this is the only case in which we have evidence in an inscription for the length of time embroiderers might have required to complete a large aër or epitaphios.

Every church needs an aër and an epitaphios, and painting would have been less time consuming and expensive, so it is not surprising to find a few painted examples. On many epitaphioi, embroidery is mixed with painted or printed elements so that faces and hands are painted or printed and the drapery on the figures is embroidered. A nineteenth-century epitaphios made in the area of Butoi, Romania, for the Monastery of St. Stephen, Meteora, Greece, is a particularly elaborate example of such “mixed-media” epitaphioi (figure 84).¹¹ Mixed-media epitaphioi are very common now, an observation confirmed by the displays of epitaphioi for sale in shops in the neighborhood around the Cathedral in Athens, shops that sell liturgical textiles, vestments, censers, and other liturgical implements and church furnishings. Other types of liturgical textiles also have painted or printed images. Images on antimensia are usually prints (figure 85), although there are painted examples (figure 86) and examples that were drawn in ink (figure 87).

¹¹ Monastery of Saint Stephen, *The Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Stephen: The Collection in the New Sacristy*, trans. Deborah Whitehouse (Meteora: Monastery of St Stephen, 1999), 57, figure 22.

Byzantine textiles carry certain possible meanings simply because they are textiles. Silk was an important product in the Byzantine economy, and long sections of the *Book of the Eparch*, a list of regulations for guilds in Constantinople, deal with the regulation of silk merchants and of silk as a commodity.¹² We also know that there was an imperial workshop of gold embroiderers in Constantinople in the eighth century because Theophanes the Confessor informs us that there was a fire at the Chrysion (the imperial gold embroidery workshop) in 793.¹³ Even earlier, Paul the Silentiary described what must have been gold embroidery on a textile at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in the sixth century.¹⁴ Textiles were also used as diplomatic gifts. The “Major Sakkos” of the Metropolitan Photios (figures 88–90), for example, is one of the most famous of all Byzantine embroidered textiles, and it was probably sent to Russia as a gift.¹⁵ Maria Theocharis and Warren Woodfin, among other scholars, have addressed this function of Byzantine embroidered textiles, the use of textiles as diplomatic gifts.¹⁶ It is a challenging topic, and as Warren Woodfin has noted, “Reconstructing the specific meaning of such

¹² Johannes Koder, trans. and ed, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991), 96–107.

¹³ Theophanes the Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and near Eastern History Ad 284–813*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 644, and note 3.

¹⁴ Paul Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius und Prokopios von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969), 249; Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 89.

¹⁵ John Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 2nd ed., Pelican History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 337.

¹⁶ Maria Theocharis, “Le Sakkos de Photios, Métropolit de Kiev—un Document confessionnel et diplomatique,” in *Drevne-russkoe iskusstvo: Vizantija i drevnjaja Rus’: k 100-letiju Andreja Nikolaevica Grabara: 1896–1990* (St. Petersburg: Bulanin, 1999): 418–29; Warren Woodfin, “Presents Given and Presence Subverted: The Cunegunda Chormantel in Bamberg and the Ideology of Byzantine Textiles,” *Gesta* 47, no. 1 (2008): 33–50.

textile gifts, however, is a bit like solving an algebraic equation with multiple unknowns.”¹⁷ I have not pursued the question of aëres and epitaphioi as diplomatic gifts between nations, but in Chapter 4 I have discussed some possible implications of aëres and epitaphioi as gifts to monasteries and churches.

Since we have evidence that embroidery was an old tradition in Constantinople, one question that we must consider is why the oldest extant embroidered liturgical textiles can be dated no earlier than the late twelfth century. The very oldest extant embroidered liturgical textiles are the Halberstadt kalymmata, which I have discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁸ We can speculate that such embroidered textiles existed earlier than the evidence of surviving examples allows us to demonstrate. In the cases of aëres and epitaphioi, however, it is possible that these types of liturgical textiles became more important during the Palaiologan period.¹⁹ There were theological and political reasons why that might have been the case, as I will discuss in Chapters 2 through 4. This is the area on which I have focused my research, questions about when and why aëres and epitaphioi developed and how they were used.

2. State of Scholarship

This is not an exhaustive survey of all types of Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles. There are several studies of the subject, and among the most useful are those of Gabriel Millet, Pauline Johnstone, Katerina Zographou-Korre, Maria Theocharis, and

¹⁷ Woodfin, “Presents Given and Presence Subverted,” 33.

¹⁸ F. Dölger, “Die Zwei byzantinische ‘Fahnen’ im Halberstädter Domschatz,” in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964): 116–27.

¹⁹ Anna Muthesius, *Studies in Silk in Byzantium* (London: The Pindar Press, 2004), 194–95.

Warren Woodfin.²⁰ Woodfin's study is concerned especially with hierarchical vestments, textiles actually worn by the clergy. The others deal with liturgical textiles more generally. Zographou-Korre and Theocharis have provided good discussions of technique. Theocharis is one of the most important and prolific scholars to have written about liturgical textiles, and her works include significant contributions to catalogues of monastery treasuries.²¹ Pauline Johnstone's book is a general but often cited survey, while Millet's book offers a more thorough description of the types of iconography that we find on aëres and epitaphioi. Since aëres and epitaphioi are characteristically Orthodox Christian textiles, I have not compared or contrasted them with analogous textiles of the Latin West. For a comparison of textiles of the Orthodox Christian Church to textiles of the Latin Rite, Joseph Braun's *Die Liturgische Gewandung in Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik*, originally published

²⁰ Gabriel Millet, *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1939, Presses Universitaires de France 1947); Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*; Katerina Zographou-Korre, *Metavyzantine-neoellenike ekklesiastike chrysokentetike* (Athens, 1985); Theocharis, *Ekklesiastika Chrysokenteta*; Warren Woodfin, "Late Byzantine Liturgical Vestments and the Iconography of Sacerdotal Power" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002).

²¹ Maria Theocharis, "Afierotikai epigrafai epi amfion tou Atho," *Theologia* 28 (1957): 452–56; Maria Theocharis, "Anekdotia amfia tes Mones Faneromenes Salaminos," *Theologia* 27 (1956): 325–33; Maria Theocharis, "Chrysokenteta amphia," in *The Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopaidi: Tradition, History, Art* (Mount Athos: The Monastery of Vatopaidi, 1998), 421–24; Maria Theocharis, "Church Gold Embroideries," in *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. Konstantinos A. Manafis (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1990), 231–42; Maria Theocharis, "Church Gold Embroideries," in *Treasures of Patmos*, ed. Athanasios D. Kominis (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1988), 185–217; Maria Theocharis, "Embroidery," in *Thesouroi tou Agiou Orous* (Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, 1997), 441–85; Maria Theocharis, "Gold-Embroidered Vestments," in *Simonopetra, Mount Athos* (Athens: Hellenic Industrial Development Bank SA, ETBA, 1991), 191–219.

in 1907, is probably still the best survey.²² A good summary in English, unusually good for the period in which it was written, can be found in *Needlework in Religion*, a book published in 1924 in which Mary Symonds and Louisa Preece discussed the use of needlework in religion across cultures.²³ While that work is over eighty years old, I have not found a similar, more recent, English-language work of the same quality.

Primary sources that mention aëres and epitaphioi are rare. Authors like Symeon of Thessaloniki discussed them in works on the liturgy, but most references to aëres and epitaphioi are to be found in monastic inventories and typika. I have discussed such sources in Chapter 1. A seminal modern work on the subject of epitaphioi is Vladimir Troitskii's "Istoriia plashchanitsy," in which the author described a theory about the development of the aër into the epitaphios.²⁴ I am skeptical about such theories, as I have attempted to explain in this study. There is more recent scholarship about aëres and epitaphioi. Athanasios Papas has discussed the place of liturgical textiles in the development of the liturgy.²⁵ Athanasios Papas and Demetrios Pallas also contributed

²² Joseph Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung in Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964).

²³ Mary (Mrs Guy Antrobus) Symonds and Louisa Preece, *Needlework in Religion: An Introductory Study of Its Inner Meaning, History, and Development; Also a Practical Guide to the Construction and Decoration of Altar Clothing and of the Vestments Required in Church Services* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1924), 41–55.

²⁴ Vladimir Troitskii, "Istoriia Plashchanitsy," *Bogoslovskii vëstnik* (1912): 362–93; 505–30.

²⁵ Tano Papas, *Studien zur Geschichte der Messgewänder im Byzantinischen Ritus* ([Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 3]. Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1965).

essays on the aër and the epitaphios to the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*.²⁶ These essays are general descriptions of the functions of the two types and of important examples. Robert Taft discussed the liturgical function of the aër as a textile used in the Great Entrance.²⁷ While Taft used some art historical evidence in his arguments, his concern with the aër had more to do with its role in the performance of the liturgy.²⁸ Scholarship that focuses on aëres and epitaphioi is rare in art history. Juliana Boycheva is probably the most important scholar to have considered the subject of aëres and epitaphioi so far in the twenty-first century.²⁹ Boycheva is especially important because she has discussed the relationship between iconography and function.

Juliana Boycheva is unusual for having studied aëres and epitaphioi at all, and especially for focusing on examples in Bulgaria. More typical are surveys of Byzantine textiles that consider aëres and epitaphioi among other types of liturgical textiles. The work of N. P. Kondakov is important in early twentieth-century scholarship concerning Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles.³⁰ Kondakov was the first scholar to publish the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios in 1902 after he discovered it at the Post-Byzantine Church

²⁶ Demetrios I. Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” in *RBK* (Stuttgart: Anton Hierseemann, 1995), 784–87; Athanasios Papas, “Liturgische Gewänder,” in *RBK* (Stuttgart: Anton Hierseemann, 1995), 742–76.

²⁷ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, especially 5–7, 207–13, 418–23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 207–13.

²⁹ Juliana Boycheva, “L’Aër dans la liturgie orthodoxe et son iconographie du XIII^e siècle jusque dans l’art post-byzantin,” *CA* 51 (2003–2004): 169–94; Juliana Boycheva, “Particularités de la fonction et de l’iconographie des épitaphioi byzantins au XIV–XV^e siècles, Epitaphioi byzantins en Bulgarie,” *PI* 38, no. 4 (2005): 15–26.

³⁰ Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, *Makedonija: Archeologicheskoe putesthestvie* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1909); Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, *Pamiatniki christianskago iskusstva na Athonje* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1902).

of the Panagia of Panagouda in Thessaloniki in 1900.³¹ One of the most extensive twentieth-century studies of epitaphioi appeared in Gabriel Millet's *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*.³² Pauline Johnstone's *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery* is also among the important discussions of Byzantine textiles.³³ Like Demetrios Pallas, however, Kondakov, Millet, and Johnstone provided little more than descriptions of the textiles they discussed and an outline of their development as types.

Many works that deal with Byzantine embroidery are catalogues of important collections. In 1925 Oreste Tafrali published an important catalogue of the treasury of the Putna Monastery in Romania.³⁴ That treasury contains one of the largest collections of post-Byzantine embroidered liturgical textiles. Émile Turdeanu pursued more detailed analysis of certain textiles, but Turdeanu's approach is very much like Gabriel Millet's in the way they both discuss the evolution of iconography.³⁵ On the subject of Romanian treasuries, Maria Ana Musicescu's publications linked Romanian art to a Byzantine past.³⁶ For some Romanian scholars, the Byzantine origin of Romanian ecclesiastical art

³¹ Kondakov, *Makedonija*, 138–42, figures 81–84; Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 266, 81.

³² Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 86–109.

³³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 114–28.

³⁴ Oreste Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).

³⁵ Émile Turdeanu, "La Broderie religieuse en Roumanie: les épitaphes moldaves aux XVe et XVIe siècles," *Cercetări Literare* 4 (1940): 164–214; Émile Turdeanu, "La Broderie religieuse en Roumanie: les étoles des XVme et XVIme siècles," *Buletinul Institutului Român din Sofia* 1 (1941): 5–61.

³⁶ Maria Ana Musicescu, *La Broderie Médiévale Roumaine* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1969); Maria Ana Musicescu, *Muzeul manastirii Putna* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1967); Maria Ana Musicescu and Vasile Draguț, *Broderia veche Românească* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1985).

has been a significant topic.³⁷ The influence of the famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga cannot be underestimated in Romanian historiography, and I have discussed some of Iorga's ideas in Chapter 4.³⁸ It should not surprise us, however, to find scholars focusing on the art of their own countries. Lazar Mirković took a particular interest in Serbian liturgical textiles, especially those attributed to the nun Jefimija.³⁹ In a survey of Russian embroidered textiles, A. N. Svirin grouped textiles into regions: Vladimir and Kiev, Novgorod, and Moscow.⁴⁰

The political circumstances of the twentieth century left their mark on the practice of art history. As Warren Woodfin has observed, "Under Communism, the concern with handicraft and folk art justified attention to these religious artifacts, but at the same time divorced them from their ecclesiastical context."⁴¹ Nevertheless, few publications have ever mentioned some of the textiles listed in Part II of this study, so every publication is of some value. Also, Communism is not the only reason for authors to have neglected the ecclesiastical context, or to have focused on embroidery techniques, or to have

³⁷ See, for example, Corina Nicolescu, *Moștenirea artei bizantine în România* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1971); Corina Nicolescu, "Les Origines de l'art roumain. Le Facteur Byzantin," in *Charisterion eis Anastasion K. Orlandon* (Athens: Bibliothéke tes en Athenais archailogikes etaireias, 1967–68), vol. 4, 50–56.

³⁸ Nicolae Iorga, *Les Arts mineurs en Roumanie* (Bucharest: Edition de l'Imprimerie de l'État, 1936); Nicolae Iorga and Gheorghe Balș, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1922).

³⁹ Lazar Mirković, *Crkveni umetnički vez* (Belgrade: Privrednik, 1940); Lazar Mirković, "Dve Srpske plashtanitse iz XIV Stoletsa u Khilandaru," *GlasSND* 11 (1932): 113–20; Lazar Mirković, *Monahinja Jefimija* (U Sremskim Karlovcima: Srpska manastirska štamparija, 1922); Lazar Mirković, "Srpska plashtanitsa monachinje Jefimija U Monastiry Putni," *GlasSND* (July 1924): 15–28; Lazar Mirković, "Srpska plashtanitsa monachinje Jefimije u manastiru Putni (Bukovina)," *Starinar* 3rd Series, volume 2 (1923): 109–20; Lazar Mirković, *Starine Fruškogoriskich Manastira*, 2 vols. (Belgrade: Kona, 1931).

⁴⁰ Aleksei Nikolaevich Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963).

⁴¹ Woodfin, "Late Byzantine Liturgical Vestments", 4.

considered liturgical textiles from a nationalist perspective. Much of the scholarship concerning aëres and epitaphioi is repetitive. Scholars simply echo the observations of older scholars, but the particular focus of any scholar has much to do with the time and place in which that scholar writes. Recently, the question of workshops has been a favorite topic for scholars specializing in liturgical textiles, but this might be part of a general trend in the discipline of art history.⁴² Scholarship like the works Juliana Boycheva may be rare, then, but Boycheva is as much a product of her time and place as Maria Ana Musicescu was of hers.

Since many of the publications that deal with the subject at all are catalogues, an essay on any one of the textiles listed in a catalogue is usually a simple description of that textile's function and iconography. A catalogue like the one edited by N. A. Mayasova for an exhibition that coincided with the eighteenth International Congress of Byzantinists in Moscow in 1991 is unusual if only for the length of the essays, which are generally detailed and informative.⁴³ It is true, however, that exhibition catalogues rarely pursue questions about iconography, style, or liturgical function at length. It is all the more important, then, when a scholar of the stature of Slobodan Ćurčić, publishes a detailed

⁴² I have briefly addressed the question of workshops in Chapter 3. See also Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina, "Ekklesiastika chrysokenteta amfia Vyzantinou Typu Ston Elladiko Choro (16os–19os). to ergasterio tes mones Varlaam Meteoron" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ioannina, 2002).

⁴³ Nataliia Andreevna Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery, Byzantium, Balkans, Russia: Catalogue of the exhibition, XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantinists, Moscow, August 8-15, 1991*, trans. B.L. Fonkich (Moscow: Kremlin State Museum Publishers, 1991).

article about the meaning or function of the epitaphios as a type of liturgical object.⁴⁴

While I disagree with some details of Ćurčić's ideas, his thoughts are a welcome and important challenge to received ideas about the function of epitaphioi. Hans Belting has also considered the question of what iconography tells us about the function of aëres and epitaphioi. Belting presented his ideas as part of a study of the Passion portrait of Jesus.⁴⁵ No single author provides a model of scholarship that I have emulated in this study. I have often critiqued aspects of a scholar's work while embracing other ideas offered by that same scholar. Because I have taken a different approach in each of the four chapters in Part I, the work of some scholars will figure more prominently than others in each chapter.

3. Research Questions and Methodology

In this study of aëres and epitaphioi, I am primarily concerned with the relationship between iconography and function. Nevertheless, I have chosen to use multiple methods to study aëres and epitaphioi. Each of the following four chapters represents a category of questions. In Chapter 1, I have discussed the terminology used to refer to aëres and epitaphioi. In Chapter 2, I have discussed the development of iconography over time. In Chapter 3, I have discussed regional variations in iconography

⁴⁴ Slobodan Ćurčić, "Late Byzantine Loca Sancta? Some Questions Regarding the Form and Function of Epitaphioi," in *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 251–61.

⁴⁵ See especially Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990), 91–129.

and style. In Chapter 4, I have concentrated on the question of what *aëres* and *epitaphioi* meant to the patrons who commissioned them.

My approach to the question of terminology in Chapter 1 is not to assemble a complete list of instances of the use of certain terms. I have not attempted to outline the development of terminology over time. I have only questioned the ways in which other scholars have interpreted and used terms that refer to liturgical textiles. I believe that reasoning backward from modern practice has led to mistaken conclusions about the development of the *aër* and the *epitaphios*. For example, Anna Gonosová has written that the texts on *epitaphioi* reveal their function as distinct liturgical textiles from *aëres*.⁴⁶ Gonosová reasonably concluded that the differentiation of the *epitaphios* from the *aër* took place at the same time as the development during the fourteenth century of the Holy Saturday ritual in which *epitaphioi* are used.⁴⁷ I have argued that, while the distinction might have been made, the textiles themselves are not good evidence for determining when the differentiation between *aëres* and *epitaphioi* actually took place. In Chapter 1, I have examined the terminology in liturgical sources, monastic *typika*, and inventories, and I have concluded that the terms in such sources were not used consistently in the same way they are used to refer to textiles in modern practice.

In Chapter 1, I have also defined the terms that I will use in the rest of this study to refer to the textiles listed in the catalogue in Part II. As I have already mentioned, the evidence for Chapter 1 will come from sources that discussed the liturgy, as well as monastic *typika* and monastery inventories. Another source for the terms discussed in the chapter, and among the most important evidence for the terms used to describe these

⁴⁶ Gonosová, “Epitaphios,” 720–21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 721.

textiles, are the inscriptions on the textiles themselves. It is curious that this evidence, the evidence of inscriptions embroidered on the textiles, has been neglected by scholars discussing the terminology applied to *aëres* and *epitaphioi* and the question of how liturgical textiles were used during the performance of the liturgy during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since the catalogue I have put together for this study is the most complete listing of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* yet assembled, we can now compare and interpret the use of these terms in the embroidered inscriptions.

In Chapter 2, I have focused on the development and significance of the types of iconography used on the textiles. I have discussed the narrative *Epitaphios Threnos* imagery, the image of Christ as *Amnos*, the *Melismos*, the Communion of the Apostles, the Man of Sorrows, and the *Mandyllion*. The question in Chapter 2 is whether we can ascribe a precise function to each extant textile based on the iconography embroidered on that textile. This question becomes more complicated when we consider groups of them. I have compared the development of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* to the development and interpretation of the liturgy. The goal is simply to discover what connections there might be among the various categories of iconography, how the iconography changed over time, and why the iconography of the *Epitaphios Threnos* came to be used on *aëres* and *epitaphioi*. Chapter two necessarily includes a discussion of media other than embroidery. Painted icons, wall paintings, and even a *cloisonné* enamel image will be discussed. I have also considered the evidence of wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy, paintings in which liturgical textiles were represented. In Chapter 2, I have critiqued some of Hans Belting's ideas about *aëres* and *epitaphioi*, but I generally embrace Belting's premise that the images on *aëres* and *epitaphioi* "did not possess autonomy as art," and that "they give

presence to the persons portrayed.”⁴⁸ In my approach to Chapter 2, I have been influenced by the ideas of Maria Engström. Since Engström has focused on hymnography in particular, I have not addressed her ideas directly, but I have to acknowledge that I have followed her lead in discussing the “interconnection between the liturgical rite, texts, and icons in Orthodoxy.”⁴⁹

In Chapter 3, I have attempted to describe regional variations in iconography and style. I have assumed that the presentation of familiar iconography in a particular style is a function of time, place, artist, and patron. The figural style of one embroidered epitaphios may be more naturalistic than another even while presenting a variation on the same iconography. I have compared and contrasted certain examples to consider whether we can make attributions based on iconography and style. Chapter 3 is partly a response to what other scholars, such as A. N. Svirin, have written about the iconography and style of liturgical embroideries in different geographical regions.⁵⁰ It is also a response to Gabriel Millet’s treatment of the iconography on epitaphioi as an evolution from the image of Christ as Amnos to the image of the Epitaphios Threnos.⁵¹ In Chapter 3, I have also discussed embroidery techniques and theories about workshops. I am skeptical about attempts to make attributions to particular workshops, and I have explained why in Chapter 3. I have suggested in Chapter 3 that art historians ought to be careful about the forms our arguments take when we attempt to make attributions. The evidence of

⁴⁸ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 1.

⁴⁹ Maria Engström, *Cheruvimskie Pesnopenija v Russkoj Liturgičeskoj Tradicii*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis (Stockholm: Almqvist och Wiksell International, 2004), 169.

⁵⁰ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit’e*.

⁵¹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 86–109.

embroidery techniques can be very useful, but we must understand that it can be used only to confirm or contradict conclusions that we have drawn from other evidence.

Chapter 4 involves more speculation than the other chapters. I have attempted to argue that aëres and epitaphioi were important sites for the display of the Orthodox identity of the patrons. That argument can be extended to particular patrons to argue that they used the epitaphios to display their Byzantine heritage. I have interpreted the iconography on aëres and epitaphioi, including the content of the embroidered inscriptions, to argue that these liturgical textiles carried messages other than their most obvious theological meanings. In Chapter 4, I have discussed Nicolae Iorga's theory of Byzantine continuity to determine whether it is a useful idea for understanding how some patrons used aëres and epitaphioi.⁵² I have concluded Chapter 4 with a discussion of what aëres and epitaphioi have meant to collectors as objects associated with Orthodox Christianity and the Byzantine past.

Throughout this study I have not attempted to conform to consistent systems of transliteration. In many cases I have followed *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, but I have usually preferred the form of a name or word that is most familiar. In certain cases I have deliberately used an unfamiliar form of a name, such as the name "Ephemia," which is embroidered on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) and which is usually transliterated as either "Euphemia" or "Jefimija." I have explained such preferences as they arise in the text.

The catalogue in Part II lists all the aëres and epitaphioi of which I am aware that were probably made by 1506. Although I am skeptical of attributions based on the

⁵² Nicolae Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, trans. Laura Treptow (Portland, Oregon: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2000).

evidence of style and iconography, as I have explained in Chapter 3, in a few of the essays in Part II I have had to rely on style and iconography as the best evidence for making guesses about when and where a textile might have been made. The organization of the catalogue is explained in the introduction to Part II. In his 1995 article about epitaphioi for the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, Demetrios Pallas estimated that there are some seventy known examples of embroidered epitaphioi dating from before 1600 or so.⁵³ This was a very general statement, and his caution suggests that Pallas was admitting that there must be examples he did not know. Pallas meant simply to leave open the possibility of further discoveries, but he must have realized that such discoveries are unlikely. Some examples might remain unpublished and unknown among the collections of museums, monasteries, or private collectors. Whatever his reasons for choosing the date range of 1300 to 1600, and whatever his method for arriving at the number seventy as the approximate number of surviving embroidered epitaphioi from that period, Pallas collated the most extensive list published so far. He also pointed out that a complete catalogue has yet to be written.⁵⁴ That is still true. The catalogue in Part II of this study is the first part of an attempt to fill this gap in the study of Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles.

⁵³ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 790.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 1: Terms

In this chapter I will examine the terms that have been used to refer to *aëres* and *epitaphioi*. Which words have been used in the sources and in modern scholarship to identify the liturgical textiles associated with the Great Entrance and with the celebrations of Good Friday and Holy Saturday in the Byzantine Rite? What do the words mean? Answering these questions ought to be a simple matter of defining each term and assigning each type of object to one term. Unfortunately it is not that simple. The terms discussed in this chapter were used flexibly in the sources. The application of these terms in the scholarly literature of the last two centuries has been often confusing, imprecise, and even inaccurate. In some cases the confusion actually results from attempts to be precise, which leads to a kind of circular reasoning. A distinction between an *aër* and an *epitaphios* is assumed for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries because there is such a distinction now. The functions of the two types are different. The iconography and inscriptions are also slightly different on the two types of object. The iconography and inscriptions are assumed to reveal what the function is and, therefore, which term is appropriate for any given example of a textile that might be either an *aër* or an *epitaphios*. The terminology itself has therefore affected how scholars have categorized the objects.

The functions of the objects to which the terms have been applied have also changed over time, which complicates the matter, so I will discuss a range of terms and types of textiles in this chapter, but I will settle upon three terms in particular for use in the rest of this study. G. A. Soteriou and Robert Taft are exceptional among modern scholars for having considered the various terms that have been used to describe the

textiles associated with the Great Entrance.¹ A single term can be used, as they were used historically, to refer to very different types of textiles. Also, more than one term can be used to describe a single type of textile. The terms I propose to use for the objects listed in the catalogue in Part II are not necessarily terms that would have been used in the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, but it is necessary for practical reasons to settle on an appropriate terminology. I have referred to each of the objects listed in the catalogue as an aër, an epitaphios, or an aër-epitaphios. In this chapter I will explain why I prefer these terms and how I will use them.

That the terms “aër” and “kalymma” have been used interchangeably in modern scholarship is significant for the present study because it preserves the somewhat flexible usage of these terms found also in early sources and because it can become confusing if the object referred to is not clearly identified as either a great aër or a little aër. The terms “great aër” and “little aër” have been used in modern scholarship to refer to the “aër” and the “kalymma” respectively. The use of the terms in the sources of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries will be more important for the present study than modern usage, however, especially because the sources provide clues to understanding the functions of the objects described. “Kalymma” was the term most often used for a small cloth used to cover either a diskos or a chalice. “Aër” is the word that usually refers to the object that modern commentary often refers to as the “great aër,” a cloth that covers both the diskos and chalice on the altar, but the word “aër” appears to have been used, in certain inventories and in inscriptions embroidered on certain textiles, to refer to more than one

¹ G. A. Soteriou, “Ta Leitourgika amphia tes Orthodoxou Hellenikes Ekklesias,” *Theologia* 20 (1949): 603–14; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216–19; Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 97–99, 124–29, and note 20 on 245–46.

type of object. Less difficult to decipher are those cases in which more than one term was used to describe what we now call the “great aër.” The problem becomes more confusing during the fourteenth century when the epitaphios, the cloth used to represent Christ in the tomb on Holy Saturday, developed from the great aër. Another term (“aër-epitaphios”) has also been used by modern scholars such as Vénétia Cottas and Robert Taft when referring to the largest liturgical textile that has been carried during the Great Entrance.² I will discuss that term separately after more closely examining what has been meant by the terms “kalymma” and “aër.”

While the Greek word “aër” (ἀήρ) has several meanings, including “mist” or “air,” in the liturgical context it generally refers to one of two types of veil: the “little aër” and the “great aër.” The term “little aër” refers to a cloth used to cover either the chalice (containing the wine of the Eucharist) or the diskos (the plate on which the bread of the Eucharist is carried during the Great Entrance). This type of liturgical cloth is also referred to as a “kalymma” (κάλυμμα)—the plural is “kalymmata” (καλύμματα)—a term that simply means “covering” and refers to the function of the cloth. The term “great aër” is now understood as referring to the larger cloth carried, or worn, in procession and placed over both the diskos and chalice once they have been transferred to the altar. In modern usage the word “aër” is most often applied to the great aër, as in Anna Gonosová’s entry for “Aër” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.³ Pauline Johnstone

² Vénétia Cottas, “Contribution à l’étude de quelques tissus liturgiques,” in *Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Studi bizantini, Studi Bizantini E Neoellenici* (Rome: Tipographia del Senato, 1940), 91–92, and note 10 on page 91; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216.

³ Gonosová, “Aer,” 27.

used the word “aër” to refer to both the little aër and the great aër.⁴ By applying the term “aër” to both types of cloth, Johnstone followed a tradition of using “aër” interchangeably with “kalymma.” Anna Gonosová also noted in her entry for “Kalymma” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* that the two words have been used interchangeably.⁵ It is common in modern scholarship to draw a distinction between “little aëres” and “great aëres” and this is true for scholars writing in Greek, like Maria Theocharis, in English, as Pauline Johnstone often does, or in German, like Athanasios Papas. Papas followed the practice of using the term “little aëres” (*kleinen aëres*) to refer to kalymmata in the article on “Liturgische Tücher” in the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*.⁶ Regardless of the modern language in which they are used, such terms are correct, in general, but they are modern uses of the terms. Usage was somewhat different during the period when these textiles first developed.

In an important article about liturgical textiles of the Greek Orthodox Church, G. A. Soteriou offered one of the most careful analyses of the terminology applied to liturgical textiles and mentioned that other terms have been used for the great aër.⁷ Soteriou’s analysis makes it clear that early references to the “aër,” when referring to a liturgical textile, used the term to refer to the type of cloth that covered both the diskos and the chalice on the altar. This is necessarily a relatively large cloth compared to kalymmata since a kalymma is meant to cover only one vessel, either the diskos or the chalice. In the late eighth or early ninth century, for example, Theodore of Studios used

⁴ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 130.

⁵ Gonosová, “Kalymma,” 1097.

⁶ Athanasios Papas, “Liturgische Tücher,” in *RBK* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1995), 787–89.

⁷ Soteriou, “Leitourgika amphia,” 607.

the term “ἀέρα” as a word that also refers to the cloth (πέπλος) that covered the gifts.⁸

The use of two terms in this way is not uncommon in early commentaries. The generic term (πέπλος) is refined in this case by the more specific term (ἀέρα). This passage in Theodore of Studios clearly refers to what we now call a great aër. The origin of the term in reference to the type of liturgical textile can be interpreted as metaphorical, a description of what cloth is like (airy) or what it does (conceals like mist).

This does not necessarily mean that the word “aër” in a liturgical context, or even when simply describing textiles, always referred to a specific type. In the eleventh-century “Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ *Panoiktirmon* in Constantinople” we find the word “aër” in a passage where the meaning is unclear. Among a list of objects donated by a certain monk, we read “Βλαττίον κιτρινοτριβλαπτον, οὗ ὁ ἀήρ ὀξύς, ἕξον μῆκος σπιθαμὰς ζ’ καὶ πλάτος ε’.”⁹ In her translation of the text Alice-Mary Talbot renders this passage as “Silk cloth in three shades of yellow, of which the background is purple, six spans long and five wide.”¹⁰ The word “aër” in Talbot’s translation is construed as referring to the background of the textile in question. It could also be construed as another term referring to the textile itself, but the passage is obscure. In Talbot’s English rendering of the word, “aër” refers to the atmosphere, the air, as though the air in the composition is shown as purple. This is not necessarily to say that there was a representation of atmosphere on this

⁸ “Ὁ δὲ ἱερεὺς τῷ ἀνώτατῳ πέπλῳ, ὃ καὶ Ἀέρα οἶδεν ὁ λόγος καλεῖν, τὰ δῶρα ἐπικαλύπτει.” Ibid.: 609; Theodore of Studios, “Hermeneia leitourgias proegiasmenon,” 1689.

⁹ Paul Gautier, “La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate,” *REB* 39 (1981): 129.

¹⁰ John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 369.

particular textile, as in an image of a landscape. The word simply refers to the space on the textile that is purple. If Talbot's interpretation is correct, and it probably is, then the word "aër" has been used in a sense that is not a technical term for a type of liturgical cloth. In other words, we must bear in mind that the use of the word "aër," when describing a cloth, was not necessarily a technical term for how the cloth was meant to be used. The word could also be used in a general, descriptive sense. There is more than one possibility, as we have seen, for what such a descriptive sense may be. In the case of the purple background, the word "aër" refers to an area on the textile.

In the fifteenth century, Symeon of Thessaloniki also used the word "aër" to describe the cloth that covers both the diskos and the chalice. By that time the image of the dead Christ had become associated with the cloth used to cover the gifts. As Laskarinas Bouras has noted, Symeon of Thessaloniki, among Byzantine authors, provided us with the most detailed description of the aër and its use.¹¹ Symeon referred to the aër as symbolizing the shroud of Christ. He further refined his description by noting that this type of cloth was also called the "epitaphios" (ἐπιτάφιος).¹² Depending on how the passage is interpreted, the term "epitaphios" might be intended to refer to the iconography of the dead Christ that appears on the cloth, but it is more likely that the term refers here to the liturgical significance of the cloth as a tomb cover. Symeon also

¹¹ Laskarina Bouras, "The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki—Byzantine Museum Athens N° 685," in *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle: recueil des rapports du IVe Colloque serbo-grec, Belgrade 1985*, ed. Radovan Samardzic and Dinko Davidov (Belgrade: Académie serbe des sciences et des arts, Institut des études balkaniques, 1987), 211.

¹² "Εἶτα τελευταῖον τὸν ἀερα θεῖς ὁ ἱερεὺς θυμιάσματος, ὅς δὴ καὶ τὸ στερέωμα, ἐν ᾧ ὁ ἀσπὴρ καὶ τὴν σινδόνα σημαίνει, διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἐσμυρνισμένον νεκρὸν πολλάκις περιφέρει τὸν Ἰσοῦν καὶ ἐπιτάφιος λέγεται..." Symeon of Thessaloniki, "Peri tes Hieras Leitourgias," 288.

used the term “amnos” (lamb) in the same passage.¹³ “Amnos” is another term that has been used to describe this type of liturgical textile, as I will explain later in this chapter. Nevertheless, the meaning of the term “aër” as Symeon used it is quite clear. The aër is the cloth that covers the diskos and chalice after the transfer of the gifts to the altar. It signifies the sindon (σινδών), the shroud of Christ. The actual function of the cloth—to cover the gifts on the altar—did not change from the time of Theodore of Studios to the time of Symeon of Thessaloniki, but interpretations of the significance of the cloth changed with the liturgy, as did the decoration of the cloth. Symeon’s language is richer, but the cloth he termed “aër” had the same essential function as it had in the time of Theodore of Studios.

Robert Taft has noted that, by the fourteenth century, the Great Entrance had come to symbolize the burial procession of Christ, which led to the decoration of the aër with the image of the dead Christ.¹⁴ Taft proposes that this development in the Great Entrance influenced the Holy Week burial procession of the Holy Saturday Orthros. There was in turn what Taft called the “retro-influence” of Holy Week ritual on the Great Entrance.¹⁵ This “retro-influence” led to the borrowing of the troparion “Noble Joseph” from Holy Week for use at the end of the Great Entrance. That troparion was embroidered on several textiles. It is difficult, however, to determine whether such

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 217; Robert F. Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence. The Paschal Triduum in the Byzantine Church,” in *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Brookfield, Vermont: Variorum, 1995. Originally published in *La celebrazione del Tidio pasquale: anamnesis e mimesis. Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Liturgia, Roma, Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, 9–13 maggio 1988. Analecta Liturgica 14. Studia Anselmiana 102*. Rome, 1990) Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, 9–13 maggio 1988. *Analecta Liturgica 14. Studia Anselmiana 102*. Rome, 1990. #989, 89–90.

¹⁵ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 246.

textiles were intended for use during the Great Entrance, Holy Week, or both. The dedication inscription on one example from Novgorod, the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30, figure 54), includes the Slavonic word “vozdukh” (or “ВЪЗДУХ” although it is written as “ВЪЗДУХЪ” in this case), the Slavonic word that was used to translate the Greek word “aër.” On the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios “vozdukh” refers to the textile itself. The final part of this inscription includes another troparion spoken by the priest when the gifts are transferred to the altar at the end of the Great Entrance. This suggests that the object was intended for use as a great aër, the cloth that covered the gifts on the altar. This textile might, therefore, be considered either a great aër or an epitaphios according to the usual modern sense of those words. In other words, it is impossible to deduce from the evidence of the inscriptions and iconography whether the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios was intended to be used as an aër or an epitaphios.

The iconography of the vozdukh of the Archbishop Euphemios is appropriate for either the Great Entrance or Holy Week. It shows a limited version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography that would become typical of epitaphioi. This may be further evidence of the “retro-influence” described by Taft, but I think it is just as likely that it is evidence of the flexible function of a cloth such as this vozdukh. As I shall argue throughout this study, it is likely that such a cloth was not as specialized as it would be in modern practice. It is sufficient for now to understand that the term “aër” seems to have been used in a way that consistently refers to the object that covers the gifts on the altar at the end of the Great Entrance. Whether the term used was the Greek word “ἄήρ” (aër) or the Slavonic word “Въздух” (vozdukh) is of little consequence. Slavonic translations of

hymns and other liturgical material tended to render their Greek prototypes rather precisely, word for word, as is the case with the troparion “Noble Joseph.” The term “въздух” can be rendered in translation as “aër” because “въздух” was in turn a literal translation of the Greek word “ἀήρ.” Inscriptions on Russian embroideries, both Novgorodian and Muscovite, continued to use the word “въздух.”

In Moldavia, where Church Slavonic was the language of the liturgy, the word “aër” is used rather than “vozdukh.” The loanword from Greek is rendered in Cyrillic characters (аер) on every Moldavian example on which the word appeared, sometimes declined with the appropriate Slavonic case ending. The Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina (catalogue number 27—figure 48) might be the earliest example. I know of no Moldavian example on which the word “vozdukh” appears. At least one Moldavian example used a term other than “aër.” The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios (catalogue number 26—figure 47) refers to that textile as an “amnos” (αμνος), again using a Greek loanword rendered in Cyrillic characters. This term refers to both the iconography on the textile and the significance of the textile, just as Symeon of Thessaloniki did when using the word “amnos.”¹⁶ In the inscription on a fifteenth-century embroidered textile at the Patmos Monastery (Patmos 1, catalogue number 38—figure 63) the word “amnos” (ἀμνὸς) occurs in the embroidered inscription where it refers to the textile itself. This term refers not to the physical nature of the textile (as the word “aër” does), but to what the textile represents. It is an amnos not only because it is embroidered with an image of the dead Christ, but because it plays the role of Christ as the sacrificed lamb in the liturgical drama. Therefore, multiple terms have

¹⁶ Symeon of Thessaloniki, “Peri tes Hieras Leitourgias,” PG, vol. 155, 288 and 385.

been used to refer to what we now call the “aër” or the “great aër.” When translated into Slavonic, the Greek word was translated literally with the corresponding Slavonic word, or the Greek word was simply borrowed and transliterated. In general, however, the word “aër” was used to refer to the type of textile that covers the gifts on the altar. Other terms (such as “epitaphios,” “sindon,” or “amnos”) were deployed to comment on the liturgical meaning of the aër and not as special terms that refer to other types of liturgical textiles.

Robert Taft has mentioned three other terms used in sources (ἡ ἅγια νεφέλη, ἡ ἀναφορά, and τὸ ἱερόν ἐπιπλόν) in reference to the large cloth placed over both the diskos and chalice on the altar after the Great Entrance.¹⁷ The term “hagia nephele” (ἡ ἅγια νεφέλη)—literally “holy cloud”—was used in three liturgical manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁸ This term means much the same thing as “aër.” The origins of such terms are easy to understand as metaphors referring either to the nature of the objects—lightweight cloths—or to the function of the objects, which are meant to conceal. While this etymology is logical, to verify the origins of such usage is beyond the scope of this study. The term “anaphora” (ἡ ἀναφορά) literally means “offering.” This term also refers to the Eucharistic offering. Applied to a liturgical vestment, “anaphora” is related in meaning to “amnos.” It occurs in two sources cited by Taft.¹⁹ Again this is a poetic term metaphorically referring to what the objects are like and what they are meant

¹⁷ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216.

¹⁸ Cited by Taft. The manuscript pages referred to are two of the twelfth century—Grottaferrata Gb II, f. 11r, Bodleian Auct. E.5.13 (Graec. Misc. 78) f. 14v.—and one of the thirteenth century—Karlsruhe EM 6. I have not consulted these manuscripts directly, but rely on Taft’s report. *Ibid.*, 216, note 127.

¹⁹ The manuscript Ottoboni Gr. 344 dated 1177, and Istanbul Metochion Panagiotou Taphou Codex 182 of the fifteenth century. The second source is also given in Dmitrievskij, Aleksej. *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisej*. 3 vols. Kiev and Saint Petersburg: Universiteta sv. Vladimira and V.F. Kirshbauma, 1895–1917, volume II, p. 475. *Ibid.*, 216, note 128.

to do. Both terms, “anaphora” and “amnos,” refer to cloths that cover the diskos and chalice after the transfer of the gifts to the altar. In other words, they covered the gifts not during the Great Entrance procession itself but at the end of the Great Entrance. Another term mentioned by Taft, “hieron epiplon” (τὸ ἱερόν ἐπιπλόν) translates simply as “holy furnishing,” but in the occurrence that Taft cited, the term was used by Symeon of Thessaloniki to describe the cloth carried in the Great Entrance and decorated with an image of the dead Christ.²⁰ The words “peplon” (πέπλον) and “epiplon” (ἐπιπλόν) are common words in references to liturgical textiles. Both words appear in the eleventh-century “Typikon of Timothy for the Monastery of the Mother of God Evergetis,” for example, but they are generic terms in this context rather than technical terms.²¹ They do not refer to a specific type of textile but only to liturgical textiles in general. “Peplos” (πέπλος) also appears in *Christos Paschon* (traditionally attributed to Gregory of Nazianzos, although the attribution is dubious).²² In this drama on the subject of the Passion of Christ, Joseph of Arimathea refers to the cloth in which he will transport Christ to the Tomb as a “peplos.”²³

The terms used to refer to liturgical textiles during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not used as carefully, or deployed as systematically, as a modern scholar might hope. Multiple terms could refer to a single type of object (such as “aër,” “epitaphios,” or “amnos”), or a single term could be used to describe more than one type of object. An example of a word that has been used to refer to very different kinds of

²⁰ Symeon of Thessaloniki, “Peri tou Theiou Naou,” 728.

²¹ Paul Gautier, “Le Typikon de la Théotokos Évergétis,” *REB* 40 (1982): 17; Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 473.

²² Alexander P. Kazhdan, “Christos Paschon,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 442–443.

²³ André Tuilier, *Grégoire de Nazianze: La Passion du Christ*, vol. 149, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 232, line 1281.

textiles is “katapetasma” (καταπέτασμα). The Greek word used in the Septuagint to refer to the veil of the temple in the Old Testament, “katapetasma” is also used in the New Testament to refer to the veil in the temple torn at the moment of Christ’s death (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45).²⁴ In modern usage the word refers to a kind of curtain, especially a curtain that hangs in an iconostasis.

This type of curtain is also referred to in the inventory of the eleventh-century “Rule of Michael Attaleiates for his Almshouse in Rhaidestos and for the Monastery of Christ *Panoiktirmon* in Constantinople.”²⁵ Several katapetasmata are mentioned in this inventory including two that are specifically referred to as being for the templon, the screen between the naos and the bema. One is listed as part of a pair described as “Καταπετάσματα δύο, τὸ μὲν ἓν εἰς τὸ τέμβλον, καὶ τὸ ἕτερον εἰς τὸν τίμιον (καὶ) ἅγιον Πρόδρομον.”²⁶ (“Two curtains, one for the templon, and the other for [St. John] the venerable and holy Forerunner”).²⁷ The second curtain mentioned in this entry was probably a podea, a textile icon that hung below an icon, or a curtain that hung in front of an icon of John the Baptist. Another katapetasma in this inventory is identified specifically as being for the templon. It is described as a “Καταπέτασμα βλαττίον τοῦ τέμβλου ὅμοιον τῆς ἐνδυτ(ῆς) περι[καλύπτον καὶ τοὺς κίονας] τῶν ἁγίων θυρ(ῶν), τὰ ἀμφοτέρω παλ(αία).”²⁸ (“A silk curtain for the templon, like the endyte, covering [the

²⁴ Daniel Gurtner has examined the Biblical use of this word exhaustively in a recent study. Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew’s Exposition of the Death of Jesus*, vol. 139, Society for New Testament Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Gautier, “La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate.”; Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 359.

²⁶ Gautier, “La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate,” 97, lines 1300–01.

²⁷ Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 359.

²⁸ Gautier, “La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate,” 97, lines 1304–05.

columns] of the holy doors, both old.”) This passage probably means that both the katapetasma and the endyte, a type of altar cloth, are of similar silk and are old. An endyte would cover the four sides of the altar, so it is similar to a curtain because the cloth hangs over the sides of the altar and conceals them. The word “βλαττίον” (“blattion” or “vlattion”) originally meant “purple” but came to mean silk in general. It was also used to refer to textiles made of silk. The word is used in both senses in the inventory of the “Rule of Michael Attaleiates.”

Perhaps the most famous extant example of the type of curtain that would hang in a templon or doorway, like the two described in this inventory, is the Nun Jefimija’s curtain for the Royal Doors of the Chilandar Monastery Katholikon, Mount Athos of circa 1399 (figure 91). Inventories and typika such as “Rule of Michael Attaleiates” are helpful for understanding how liturgical textiles were described and which terms were used to describe them. The word “katapetasma,” however, refers in this single text specifically to a type of curtain for the templon and more generally to other types of curtains and hangings. The term “katapetasma” is relevant to a discussion of aëres and epitaphioi for another reason. In an important study of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, however, Laskarina Bouras wrote, “In Palaiologan times, the epitaphios is usually recorded as katapetasma or amnos-aer.”²⁹ Bouras cites a seminal study by G. A. Soteriou and a passage from Symeon of Thessaloniki.³⁰ Symeon of Thessaloniki did use the term “katapetasma” to refer to the aër, but Bouras’ assertion is not accurate.

Although both terms, “katapetasma” and “amnos-aer,” were used in reference to

²⁹ Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 211.

³⁰ Ibid., 211, notes 1 and 2; Soteriou, “Leitourgika amphia,” 606–07; Symeon of Thessaloniki, *Ta hapanta* (Thessaloniki: Regopoulou, 1882), 167. See also D. N. Moriates, “Epitafios,” in *ThEE* (1964), volume 5, 792–94.

aëres, neither term is the single word preferred by Palaiologan authors when discussing the type of object we now call the “aër” or “great aër.” The word “katapetasma” is used in the passage from Symeon of Thessaloniki cited by Bouras, but the words “amnos” and “aër” are also used, separately and not hyphenated as a single term: “τὸ καταπέτασμα, τὸ ὁποῖον εἶναι ὁ ἀήρ, ἥγουν ὁ ἀμνὸς” (the katapetasma, which is like the aër, which is to say the amnos).³¹ This passage is another case in which Symeon of Thessaloniki used multiple terms to clarify his meaning. The use of “katapetasma” is not, in this case, a technical term for a cloth of a particular function. It is a general term for a veil. It is also possible that “katapetasma” might be intended, in the passage from Symeon of Thessaloniki cited by Bouras, as a poetic reference to the veil of the temple. This would make the word part of a mystagogic interpretation of this element of the liturgy like Symeon’s use of the word “epitaphios” in reference the aër in the other passage cited by Bouras. Robert Taft has noted that such mystagogic interpretations have often been applied to liturgical textiles.³² Symeon followed the word “katapetasma” with a term that indicates more specifically what the object is (aër), and then a word that explains what the textile in question means (amnos). The word “aër,” then, is actually the word most consistently used by Symeon of Thessaloniki to refer to the type of textile used to cover the gifts on the altar. This is true in other texts of the Palaiologan period including, as we have seen, inscriptions embroidered on the textiles.

More than one term has been used to describe the cloth used to cover both the diskos and chalice, including “aër” and “epitaphios.” Is it also the case that a single term,

³¹ Symeon of Thessaloniki, *Ta hapanta*, 167. In PG, vol. 155, we find “τοῦ καταπετάσματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ ἀήρ, ἥτοι ὁ ἀμνὸς” (the *katapetasmatos*, which is the aër, or the amnos). Symeon of Thessaloniki, “Peri ton Hieron Cheirotoneion,” 385.

³² Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 217.

“aër,” was used in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, as it is today, to refer to more than one type of object? Maria Theocharis has cited a passage from Patmos Codex 75 that seems to refer to an aër or epitaphios at the Patmos Monastery.³³ A donation is recorded in that manuscript in which one textile is referred to as an “amnos” and another is referred to as an “aër.” Theocharis gives this translation: “I humbly, of my own wish and desire and free will, donate to the holy, reverend and sacred monastery...the amnos of gold, with wire, and an aer of gold, also with wire on a red ground.”³⁴ Since the dedication embroidered on an extant textile at Patmos includes the phrase “Ἀφιερώθη ὁ παρὼν ἀμνὸς εἰς τὸν μέγαν νικόλαον τῆς μεγίστης...” (This amnos was dedicated to the Great Nikolaos on the island of Megiste...),” and since the extant textile matches the description in the Patmos Codex 75, the manuscript reference is assumed to refer to this very textile (catalogue number 38, figure 63). This is logical, and if it is accurate, then the word “amnos” refers in both cases to a large cloth of the type now usually called “epitaphios.” This type of textile was usually referred to as an “aër” in the fifteenth century. The manuscript entry also refers to an “aër” made of the same material, but this is apparently a separate textile and possibly also a different type of textile. It is impossible to say for certain what type of textile is meant in this case, but it is clear that whether or not Patmos 1 was actually used in the same way as a modern aër or epitaphios is a separate question from what the terms “amnos,” “aër,” and “epitaphios” actually meant in the fifteenth century.

³³ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 191.

³⁴ I have not examined this manuscript, so I rely upon the report given by Maria Theocharis. Ibid.

Just to make matters more confusing, I would suggest that the type of object referred to as an “aër” in the Patmos Codex 75 might be the type of object usually referred to as a “kalymma.” When the type of object referred to by Johnstone and others as “little aër” is mentioned in sources such as monastery inventories, the term “kalymma” is usually used. Was the second textile mentioned in the Patmos Codex 75 a kalymma or did the author of the entry not necessarily intend to draw a distinction between an aër and an amnos as we would distinguish today between an aër and an epitaphios respectively? Ultimately this question must remain moot, but the text does seem to differentiate between two types of textiles. Such sources can be difficult to interpret, however, especially when it comes to the relatively flexible use of terms that have in the meantime taken on very specific meanings. Even relatively unambiguous texts can be difficult to interpret. Another manuscript at the Patmos Monastery of Saint John the Theologian mentions several poterokalymmata (ποτηροκαλύμματα), but it also lists two aëres.³⁵ In this case there does seem to be a precise distinction between two types of textile, but what that distinction might have been is difficult to interpret. The poterokalymmata are described as “two embroidered poterokalymmata” and “five other antique poterokalymmata.”³⁶ This inventory is dated 1200, very early for such a specific mention of embroidered kalymmata, although we cannot tell from the inventory whether the kalymmata in question were embroidered with figures or only with decorative motifs. Abstract or vegetal designs are common on extant kalymmata of later periods, including

³⁵ Ch. Astruc, “L’Inventaire dressé en Septembre 1200 du Trésor et de la Bibliothèque de Patmos,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 8 (1981): 21.

³⁶ “ποτηροκαλύμματ(α) κεντιτὰ δύο” and “ἐτ(ε)ρ(α) ποτηροκαλύμματ(α) παλαιὰ πέντε” Ibid.

many fine examples preserved at the Benaki Museum, such as Benaki 9371 dated 1664 (figure 92).³⁷

The earliest extant pair of kalymmata embroidered with figures is now in Halberstadt, Germany. Usually dated to the late twelfth century (figures 93 and 94), the cloths are embroidered with the Communion of the Apostles.³⁸ This was iconography of some antiquity by the twelfth century. The Communion of the Apostles had been used at least since the sixth-century on objects like the Riha Paten (figure 95), a diskos now at Dumbarton Oaks. As Pauline Johnstone pointed out, however, the Halberstadt kalymmata are in fact the earliest extant examples of any type of embroidered Byzantine liturgical textile, whether figural or abstract.³⁹ They are, therefore, the earliest examples of an embroidered version of the Communion of the Apostles. These kalymmata seem to have been taken from Byzantine territory, probably Constantinople, during the Fourth Crusade. It is likely that they were brought to Halberstadt in the early thirteenth century by Conrad of Kosigk, the bishop of Halberstadt, who also took relics from Constantinople to Saxony.⁴⁰ The Halberstadt kalymmata are embroidered with inscriptions couched in gold. The inscriptions, as is the case on several kalymmata, include the imperatives “eat” (φάγετε—on the diskokalymma) and “drink” (πίετε—on the poterokalymma) making the distinction between diskokalymma and poterokalymma quite plain. One of these cloths

³⁷ I saw this example at the Benaki Museum on 22 June 2005. See also Eugenia Vei Chatzidaki, *Ekklesiastika kentemata Mouseiou Benake* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1953), 51, and plate KΘ3.

³⁸ Dölger, “Die Zwei byzantinische ‘Fahnen’ im Halberstädter Domschatz.”

³⁹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 114.

⁴⁰ Dölger, “Die Zwei byzantinische ‘Fahnen’ im Halberstädter Domschatz.”; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 114; Alfred J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, vol. 29, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 226–27, 39.

was meant to cover the diskos, and the other was meant to cover the chalice. This is perhaps an obvious point, but it is a point worth noting.

Similar inscriptions also appear on other embroidered textiles, such as the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4—figures 11 and 12) of at least a century later than the Halberstadt kalymmata.⁴¹ On the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios the inscriptions illustrated in the panels at either end read in full “ΠΙΕΤΕ ΕΞ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ (τ)ΟΥΤΩ ΕΣΤ(ι) / ΤΟ ΕΜΑ ΜΟΥ ΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΚΕ/ΝΙΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ (Drink from it, all; this is my blood of the covenant)” and “ΛΑΒΕΤΕ ΦΑΓΕΤΕ ΤΟΥΤΩ / ΕΣΤΗΝ ΤΟ ΣΩ/ΜΑ ΜΟΥ (Take, eat, this is my body).” The corresponding inscriptions on the Halberstadt kalymmata are damaged, but the imperative verbs are legible.⁴² The iconography, also damaged, reinforces the distinction. The poterokalymma clearly shows Christ with a chalice. It is because of the iconography and inscriptions on the Halberstadt kalymmata that we can identify one as a diskokalymma and the other as a poterokalymma. In modern English usage, as in Pauline Johnstone’s *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, these veils are referred to as “aëres.”⁴³ The border inscriptions on the Halberstadt kalymmata are lengthy dedications that mention Sevastos Alexios Palaiologos as the patron. From this evidence F. Dölger dated these kalymmata to the period between 1185 and 1195.⁴⁴ If the poterokalymmata that the Patmos inventory records were new in 1200, then the two sets (the Patmos kalymmata and the Halberstadt

⁴¹ The date of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is discussed at catalogue number 4 in Part I.

⁴² The Halberstadt diskokalymma reads “ΛΑΒΕΤΕ [φα]ΓΕΤΕ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΣΩ/ΜΑ [μ]ΟΥ.”

⁴³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 114–15.

⁴⁴ Dölger, “Die Zwei byzantinische ‘Fahnen’ im Halberstädter Domschatz,” 126.

kalymmata) were probably made during the same period. It was perhaps during this period that figural embroidery first became associated with kalymmata and aëres.

There is no earlier evidence of kalymmata and aëres embroidered with figures than the Halberstadt kalymmata, but there are certainly earlier written references to embroidered textiles. Paul the Silentiary's famous sixth-century description of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople includes a passage that describes a textile.⁴⁵ What exactly that sixth-century textile might have been is a question that cannot be considered at length in this study. It was probably a kind of altar cloth. The passage from Paul the Silentiary's ekphrasis includes a description of what might have been silk thread wrapped in gold and couched onto a cloth with a woven image. The type of thread described—silk wrapped in gold, silver, or gilt silver—can be seen on many examples. The Bloomington Epitaphios (figures 96–99) shows that the technique was still used in the sixteenth century with great technical skill. The passage from Paul the Silentiary refers to a cloth with embroidery, but this was a specific cloth made for and located in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The function of that cloth was probably ornamental. It was what Johnstone would call a church furnishing, like a katapetasma or a podea.

That the Patmos inventory refers specifically both to “embroidered” kalymmata and to “antique” kalymmata suggests that the embroidered examples were relatively new at the time. The fact that this distinction is made at all could be significant if the older examples were undecorated, or at least decorated with a technique other than embroidery. It is not unreasonable to speculate that the embroidered kalymmata at Patmos were

⁴⁵ Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius und Prokopios von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit*, 249; Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 89.

embroidered with the type of figural scene, the Communion of the Apostles, used on the Halberstadt kalymmata, but nothing in the inventory allows us to do more than guess about this. It is equally possible that the older examples were simply located in a different place within the treasury being inventoried from the place where the newer kalymmata were kept. This would explain why they are separated in the list. Other inventories follow a similar pattern. The inventory of the Monastery of the Mother of God Eleousa in Stroumitza lists eleven podeai (hanging icons) for feast days separately from older examples for everyday use.⁴⁶ It is also possible that this is just how the Patmos inventory was put together. The distinction between “embroidered poterokalymmata” and “antique poterokalymmata” in the Patmos inventory could mean only that there were two embroidered poterokalymmata and five older poterokalymmata, and that the five older poterokalymmata were different from the other two primarily because of their relative age, not necessarily because of the technique of decoration.

Another question suggested by the wording of the Patmos inventory is whether the two embroidered poterokalymmata mentioned could actually be a set: one diskokalymma and one poterokalymma. Even though we find the word “poterokalymmata” in the Patmos inventory, we do not find a corresponding word for diskokalymmata. All we can do is speculate, but the absence of the term diskokalymma in such inventories does raise the question about whether the objects listed as poterokalymmata might include diskokalymmata among them. When referring to the diskos and the chalice as objects, often the words are compounded as “diskopoterion”

⁴⁶ R. P. Louis Petit, *Le Monastère de Notre-Dame de Pitié en Macédoine*, vol. 6, *Izvestiia Russkago Archeologicheskago Instituta v Konstantinoplie* (Sofia: Impr. d'État, 1900); Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, volume 4, 1673.

(δισκοποτήριον), as in the eleventh-century “Rule of Michael Attaleiates.”⁴⁷ In another inventory of the thirteenth century we find an entry for “two poterokalymmata pieces.”⁴⁸ In his translation of this document, George Dennis renders the entry as “Two pieces [of silk cloth] to cover the chalice.”⁴⁹ Does the entry actually mean to refer to two poterokalymmata or to a pair of kalymmata, one for the chalice and one for the diskos? We know that the two types could be differentiated by their iconography, but whether such a distinction was made between poterokalymmata and diskokalymmata in the terms used to refer to them is impossible to determine from the evidence. It is possible then that “poterokalymma” is meant as a term that refers also to the diskokalymma.

Another possibility is that the diskokalymma, as a type of liturgical cloth, did not exist in the same form as we find represented by the Halberstadt kalymmata until about the end of the twelfth century. Since the term most often used is “poterokalymma” (or the plural “poterokalymmata”) it is also possible that the word “aër” was used in such documents to refer to an object that we would now call a “diskokalymma.” In other words, the term “aër” might have been used to refer to the slightly different type of cloth that was used to cover the diskos. Perhaps that is what is meant in the Patmos Codex 75, which refers to an “amnos” and an “aër.”⁵⁰ The amnos was what we would now call either a great aër or an epitaphios, while the aër mentioned in that text was what the type of veil usually called a kalymma. This can be only speculation, but the absence of the

⁴⁷ Gautier, “La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate,” 127–29; Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 369.

⁴⁸ “Ποτηροκαλύμματα τμήματα δύο.” This entry appears in the “Testament of Maximos for the Monastery of the Mother of God at Skoteine near Philadelphia.” Manouel Gedeon, “Diatheke Maximou monachou ktitoros tes en Lydia mones Kotines (1247),” *Mikrasiatika Chronika* 2 (1939): 281.

⁴⁹ Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 1186.

⁵⁰ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 191.

term diskokalymma from most sources is perplexing. It is possible, however, that the word “poterokalymma” was often used to refer to both types of veil, the chalice veil and the paten veil. The Patmos inventory of 1200 is a very early example of a text that does refer to a specific type of embroidered liturgical textile (kalymmata in this case), but it is worth repeating that all we can deduce from the evidence of the Patmos inventory is that there were two embroidered poterokalymmata in that treasury in 1200. We cannot know whether the embroidery was figural. We cannot know whether the two objects are in fact one poterokalymma and one diskokalymma. We cannot even deduce from this or other evidence whether such a distinction was common in 1200. The Halberstadt kalymmata prove that the distinction had been made at least once by 1200, but the distinction in that case is iconographic and is not reflected in the words used to describe such textiles in inscriptions or in other written sources.

In the fourteenth-century “Typikon of Theodora Synadene for the Convent of the Mother of God *Bebaia Elpis* in Constantinople,” there is a list of donations from John Komnenos Doukas Angelos Branas Palaiologos, who was the nephew of Theodora Synadene, the author of the typikon.⁵¹ Among the items listed is a “καλύμματος ὀλομαργάρου, ὃ καλοῦσι συρμάτινον (veil covered in pearls, which they call a syrmatinon).”⁵² Alice-Mary Talbot did not translate the word “syrmatinon” in her English translation of the typikon.⁵³ The word simply refers to the embroidery technique in which

⁵¹ Hippolyte Delehay, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues* (Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1921), 93; Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 1562.

⁵² Delehay, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues*, 93.

⁵³ Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 1562.

fine metal wire (“syrmata”) was couched onto the surface.⁵⁴ The example mentioned, according to the description in the typikon, was decorated with an image of the Mother of God. In this case, the word “kalymmatos” seems to refer to a cloth used to cover the chalice during the Great Entrance. Later examples of poterokalymmata were often decorated with images of the Mother of God. The image of the Virgin has been used to decorate poterokalymmata, while the image of the Melismos (Christ shown on the altar, or even lying on a diskos) has been used on diskokalymmata. Among many other examples, a seventeenth-century poterokalymma from the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia (figure 100) is one of a presumed set of three cloths.⁵⁵ The set also includes a diskokalymma and an aër (figures 101 and 102 respectively). The poterokalymma shows the Virgin, identified with the inscription ΜΡ ΘΥ (Meter Theou—Mother of God) and Christ. If this is the type of veil described in the “Typikon of Theodora Synadene,” then the word “syrmatinon” simply describes an aspect of the technique used to decorate a kalymma.⁵⁶ The word “kalymma,” in the case of this typikon, seems to have been used in the general sense of a textile veil, a cloth used as covering.

The set of seventeenth-century veils from the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia (figures 100–102) is interesting for another reason.⁵⁷ While the poterokalymma shows the Mother of God (figure 100), the diskokalymma shows the Melismos (figure 101). The aër from that set shows the figure of Christ as the Amnos

⁵⁴ Anna Gonosová, “Embroidery,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 689–90.

⁵⁵ Praskovia Sergieevna Uvarova, *Katalog riznitsy Spaso-Preobrazhenskago monastyria v Iaroslavlie* (Moscow: A. I. Mamontova, 1887), 27.

⁵⁶ Delehayé, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues*, 93.

⁵⁷ Uvarova, *Katalog riznitsy Spaso-Preobrazhenskago monastyria v Iaroslavlie*, 27.

(figure 102). These types of iconography will be discussed further in Chapter 2. For now it is interesting to note that the use of distinct iconographies on the three types of veil associated with the Great Entrance demonstrates that, by the seventeenth century, the differentiation among the three types was complete. That is, the respective functions of the poterokalymma, the diskokalymma, and the aër were distinct regardless of the terms used to identify them in inventories. The questions of what exactly a kalymma is and of when poterokalymmata became distinct in their iconography from diskokalymmata are secondary to the present study. It is necessary, however, to understand kalymmata insofar as the term “aër” was used usually, and perhaps exclusively, to refer to a type of textile that was not a kalymma. The two types (kalymma and aër) were related. Both types were carried during the Great Entrance. In general, however, separate terms were used to refer to them. The distinction between kalymmata and aëres in monastic inventories seems usually to confirm that an aër was an object separate from kalymmata and that the aër was meant to cover both the chalice and the paten once the gifts had been transferred to the altar at the end of the Great Entrance.

In certain sources, then, such as several works of Symeon of Thessaloniki, the word “aër” was clearly used to identify the type of object that covered both the diskos and chalice on the altar. The function and significance of each object described was of greater concern to Symeon of Thessaloniki than the terms he used to refer to them, so the use of multiple terms was intended only to clarify rather than to confuse. For example, in a passage I have already cited, the terms “aër,” “sindon” and “epitaphios” were used to refer to a single type of textile used to cover the gifts on the altar.⁵⁸ The word “sindon” is

⁵⁸ Symeon of Thessaloniki, “Peri tes Hieras Leitourgias,” 288.

deployed by Symeon of Thessaloniki to explain the significance of the aër. “Sindon,” which simply means “cloth” or “linen cloth,” often refers to the sheet used by Joseph of Arimathea to wrap the body of Christ. The word is used in all four of the canonical gospels: Matthew 27:59, Mark 16:46, Luke 24:53, John 19:40. The word “sindon” is used also in the troparion “Noble Joseph,” which is associated with both Good Friday and the Great Entrance.⁵⁹ The word “sindon” had also been applied to a very different kind of textile. The eiliton—a type of cloth used to cover the altar and on which the gifts would be placed—was compared to the “sindon” by Isidore of Pelousion in the fifth century: “The spreading of the clean sindon under the sacred gifts signifies the ministry of Joseph of Arimathea.”⁶⁰ Here the word “sindon” is used in place of the more common word “eiliton” to refer to the cloth spread on the altar. Although such uses of the word “sindon”, as in Isidore’s description of the eiliton and in Symeon’s description of the aër, are meant only to compare either the eiliton or the aër to the sheet used by Joseph to wrap the body of Christ, the application of a single term to more than one type of object raises the question of whether other terms were used in this way. The word “sindon” has been used to describe more than one kind of textile, but the use in the cases cited is poetic, a simile (in the case of Symeon) or metaphor (in the case of Isidore of Pelousion) meant to convey the significance of the actual liturgical textile as representing the cloth that Joseph used to wrap Christ.

The word “sindon” is also associated with the type of textile called “epitaphios” today. The term “epitaphios,” in modern usage, refers strictly to the large cloth decorated with the Epitaphios Threnos iconography and used during Holy Week to represent Christ

⁵⁹ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 246.

⁶⁰ Isidore of Pelusium, “Epistulae,” 264–65; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 245.

in the tomb on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Pauline Johnstone defined the term “Epitaphios Sindon” this way: “A large veil decorated with the Body of the Crucified Christ which is carried in procession in the Good Friday services. Usually called simply epitaphios.”⁶¹ Johnstone cited no source for this definition. The textiles that the term “epitaphios” refers to in modern usage were first given serious scholarly attention in 1912 by Vladimir Troitskii in his seminal study “Istoriia plashchanitsy.”⁶² In modern Slavic languages, the word that refers to the Holy Saturday epitaphios is derived from the Old Church Slavonic word for the cloth that Joseph used to wrap the body of Christ. This means that the Old Church Slavonic term “plashchanitsa” (пlащаница) is significant for our understanding of the great aër because it is a translation of the Greek word “sindon.” The term “plashchanitsa” was not used interchangeably in Slavonic with the word “vozdukh” (воздух), which was used to translate the Greek word “aër.” The term “plashchanitsa” is applied now to the epitaphios, but this usage developed from the same type of poetic and theological comparison as Symeon of Thessaloniki’s use of the words “sindon” and “epitaphios” further to describe the type of cloth he termed an “aër.”

In the Church Slavonic inscriptions on some of the textiles listed in the catalogue in Part II of this study, the word “plashchanitsa” (пlащаница) is used to translate the Greek word “sindon” where it occurs in the troparion “Noble Joseph.” For example, on the Aër-Epitaphios of Archbishop Euphemios dated 1440/41 (catalogue number 30—figure 54) we find both words “plashchanitsa” and “vozdukh.” In that case the word “plashchanitsa” occurs in an excerpt from the troparion “Noble Joseph” and refers to the cloth that Joseph of Arimathea used to wrap the body of Christ. The word “vozdukh”

⁶¹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*.

⁶² Troitskii, “Istoriia Plashchanitsy,” 362–93; 505–30.

occurs in the dedication on the same textile and refers to the textile itself, the aër being offered by Euthymios. The Greek word “aër” is translated literally by the Slavonic word “vozdukh” (воздух), and the Slavonic word “plashchanitsa” literally translates the Greek word “sindon.” In this case, then, the two words are used much the same way as Symeon of Thessaloniki used “aër” and “sindon.” One word indicates what the object is, and the other word is part of the hymn that explains what the object represents. We might expect a Slavonic translation of the Greek word “epitaphios” to be used to refer to this type of veil rather than the Slavonic translation of “sindon.” In modern Slavic languages, however, an adaptation of the Church Slavonic word “plashchanitsa” is used to refer to the Holy Saturday epitaphios. At least one Arabic text, on the other hand, indicates that, by the seventeenth century, the Greek word “ἐπιτάφιον” was simply transliterated phonetically into Arabic (as ابيطافيون).⁶³

We must also consider the question of the extent to which iconography affected terminology. While Symeon of Thessaloniki had used the word “epitaphios” to explain the significance of the textile, the popular use of the term among Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians today might have more to do with the familiar title of the iconography. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove this, but the use of a different term among Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christians suggests that the title of the iconography has been more important among Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians. The Old Church Slavonic title “На Гробное Рыданіе” (The Lamentation at the Grave) was used as a translation of the Greek title “Epitaphios Threnos.” It appears, for example, on

⁶³ Paul of Aleppo, *Voyage du patriarche Macarie d’Antioche*, ed. Basile Radu, PO, vol. 24, p. 483.

the late fifteenth-century Stieglitz Museum Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 35, figure 59), but the phrase was used only as a title for the iconography and was not adopted as a special term to refer to a type of textile.

The title “Epitaphios Threnos” in Greek had been applied to the iconography in wall paintings such as the late thirteenth-century Epitaphios Threnos scene painted at the Church of St. Kliment at Ohrid (figure 103). On extant embroidered examples, the earliest use of the title on an aër-epitaphios is probably the instance on the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje of about 1346 (catalogue number 6—figure 17) where it occurs translated into Old Church Slavonic. The earliest embroidered example in Greek is on the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis also of the fourteenth century (catalogue number 9—figure 22). The iconography of these two examples is slightly different, and other titles have also been used to identify the same types of iconography. “Entombment” is the most common alternative title. “Entombment,” in Greek (Ὁ Ἐνταφιασμῶς) or Church Slavonic (Положеніе во гробъ), appears on three examples: catalogue numbers 10, 26, and 44. It also occurs in Georgian in the dedication inscription on the Epitaphios of King George VIII (catalogue number 32). “Lamentation at the Grave,” in Greek (Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος θρήνος) or Slavonic (Рыданіе на Гробное), appears on eight examples: catalogue numbers 6, 9, 11, 15, 16b, 34, 35, and 47. Three examples use only Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος (The Epitaphios), an abbreviated version of the title: catalogue numbers 13, 38 and 28. The title “Deposition” appears in Greek (Ἡ Ἀποκαθήλωσις) on only one example listed in the catalogue: number 39, Patmos 2. The Church Slavonic version of the title “Deposition” also appears on only one example in the catalogue: number 19, or “Chilandar 2.”

The title “King of Glory,” which identifies the figure of Christ, appears on three textiles listed in the catalogue: numbers 7, 8, and 32. It appears in Greek on all three examples, although the rest of the text on catalogue number 32 is in Georgian. On all the examples on which the word occurs, “epitaphios” appears only as part of the title of the iconography. Dedications usually refer to these textiles as “aëres.” The word “aër,” in Greek or Slavonic, appears on thirteen examples that date to the period before 1506. The earliest is catalogue number 13 (the Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites from Glavenica and Berat, Albania of 1373). The others are catalogue numbers 14, 25, 27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49. Six of these (numbers 27, 28, 42, 44, 45, 49) are Moldavian examples in which the Greek loanword “aër,” rather than the Church Slavonic word “vozdukh,” is used within inscriptions that are otherwise in Church Slavonic. Two examples use the word “amnos” in the dedication to refer to the textile itself: catalogue numbers 26 and 38. Among examples made after 1500, “Ο Ἐπιτάφιος θρῆνος” is the most common title embroidered on Greek epitaphioi.

The origin of the modern use of the word “epitaphios” as a special term that refers to a type of liturgical cloth with a specific function is difficult to trace. It is possible to find post-Byzantine examples of the term used in this way, such the Arabic text already mentioned.⁶⁴ The inscription on an epitaphios in the Benaki Museum (figure 104), dated 1776, refers to the object itself as an “epitaphios.”⁶⁵ In the earliest applications of the word to a type of veil, however, the meaning of the word “epitaphios” was descriptive of a veil’s liturgical significance. The use of the word “epitaphios” to describe an aër

⁶⁴ Paul of Aleppo, *Voyage du patriarche Macarie d’Antioche*, ed. Basile Radu, PO, vol. 24, p. 483.

⁶⁵ “Ο ΠΑΡΟΝ ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ.... (The present epitaphios...)” The museum accession number for this epitaphios is Benaki 33726.

probably had its origins in the writings of Symeon of Thessaloniki in which the use of the term clarified the liturgical significance of the aër. Symeon of Thessaloniki's further refinement of the word "aër" with the word "epitaphios" created another, mystagogic, shade of meaning beyond the literal meaning of either word. That meaning is somewhat complicated, and the word "epitaphios," meaning simply "on the tomb" or "at the tomb," can refer either to the symbolism of the aër as the stone used to seal the tomb or to the dramatic scene that the liturgy enacts at the moment when the gifts are transferred to the altar and the aër is placed over them.⁶⁶ As Symeon used it, the word "epitaphios" refers especially to the function of a cloth used in the performance of the liturgy and to the mystagogic significance of the cloth rather than to the textile itself.

The modern sense of the word "epitaphios," meaning the cloth used on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, has come to have more to do with the narrative scene represented. While the term now usually refers to the large cloth used during Holy Week when the Lamentation, the Epitaphios Threnos, is acted out with the textile taking the role of Christ, the word "epitaphios" also refers to the portable structure on which the textile is placed and carried in procession during the Holy Saturday Orthros. It is the dramatic scene, the narrative acted out in the burial procession of Holy Saturday, and only later in the Great Entrance, that has become more closely associated with the term "epitaphios" as it applies to the cloth used on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. That meaning probably developed by association with the iconography embroidered on the textiles, which developed over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from the image of Christ as the Amnos into the full, narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography.

⁶⁶ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 45, 217.

The term “epitaphios,” with its possible meanings of “at the tomb” or “on the tomb,” is ambiguous, but the appearance of the full title of the iconography (“Epitaphios Threnos” or “Lamentation at the Tomb”), as in wall paintings of the scene, alleviates the ambiguity by making the dramatic sense explicit. It is that sense that gives us the modern connotation of the word. It is likely, then, that the familiar title embroidered on epitaphioi helped to determine, in Greek, which term would be used most commonly to refer to the textile associated with Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

In other words, the title of the iconography familiar from the large veil used in the Epitaphios Threnos service during Holy Week meant that the word “epitaphios” was preferred as the term for that veil, as opposed to the more general word “aër.” The strong association of the term “epitaphios” with the iconography of the “Epitaphios Threnos” means that old textiles that might have been meant for use as aëres are now usually referred to as epitaphioi. Not only do modern authors refer to such textiles as “epitaphioi,” they have also assumed that such textiles always were epitaphioi for use during Holy Week. In the case of one epitaphios, modern translations of the inscription make this tendency explicit. The Albanian Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites from Glavenica and Berat (catalogue number 13, figures 26–27) includes both words among the embroidered inscriptions. While the title “Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ” is embroidered next to Christ’s halo, the term used to refer to the textile itself in the dedication in the border is “ΑΕΡΑΣ” (aër). Theofan Popa and Frederick Stamati translated “ΑΕΡΑΣ” as “epitaf” or “epitaph,” a translation that changes the word completely.⁶⁷ In doing so, Popa and

⁶⁷ Theofan Popa, “Cinq inscriptions d’églises et leur donées sur les princes albanais du moyen age,” *Buletin i Universitetit Shtetëror të Tiranës. Seria shkencat*

Stamati interpreted the word “ΑΕΡΑΣ” as a reference to the presumed function of the textile without considering that the function was flexible or different from their assumptions based on the iconography. The actual function of the textile cannot be clearly deduced from the evidence because the terminology used on any embroidered *aër* or *epitaphios* cannot be relied upon, or dismissed, as evidence for the function of that textile. I propose in Chapter 2 that most of the textiles listed in the catalogue for this study could have been used as either an “*aër*” or an “*epitaphios*.” Rather than distinct types with discrete functions, as they are now, *aëres* and *epitaphioi* were indistinguishable in the early phase of their development.

In this study, then, I am concerned with both types. One is the “*aër*” or “great *aër*,” the type that covers the gifts on the altar after the Great Entrance. The other is the “*epitaphios*,” the type that represents Christ in the burial procession and in the tomb during Holy Week. This is the type that Pauline Johnstone also called the “*Epitaphios Sindon*.”⁶⁸ Since these are usually referred to as “*aëres*” and “*epitaphioi*” respectively, that is how I have referred to them in this study. However, some of these objects are not clearly of either type. That is, some extant examples may represent a transitional type of textile that could have been used as an *aër* or as an *epitaphios* or as both. I cannot claim to be able to deduce in every case exactly how the object was used. For those examples—most of the textiles listed in the catalogue—I have chosen to use the term “*aër-epitaphios*.” This term has been used by a number of scholars, notably Robert Taft and Vénétia Cottas, but their usage of the hyphenated term is slightly different from mine.

shoqërore. 11, no. 2 (1957): 198; Frederick Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica: New Data Emerging from the Technological Study,” *Studia Albanica*, no. 2 (2005): 139.

⁶⁸ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 130.

I have been unable to trace the exact origin of the hyphenated term “aër-epitaphios.” It is a useful term, however, and it has been used frequently in French, Greek, and English scholarship to refer to the cloth carried at the end of the procession during the Great Entrance as depicted in numerous wall paintings in churches. In this sense, it refers to a possibly transitional stage in the development of the aër into the epitaphios. Robert Taft used it as a technical term, but without citing any sources, to refer to the large veil decorated with the image of Christ as Amnos as shown in wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy.⁶⁹ I agree with Taft that the type of textile shown in such paintings was the cloth used to cover the diskos and chalice on the altar after the Great Entrance. I prefer to use the term “aër” to refer to this type of veil. Ironically, the hyphenated term “aër-epitaphios” as Taft used it seems to have been popularized by Vénétia Cottas.⁷⁰ This is ironic because Cottas has been criticized by a number of scholars for her work on the subject. Taft himself described Cottas as being “more than a bit muddled on the whole subject” of the epitaphios.⁷¹ This criticism is understandable, but as a result, any good ideas offered by Cottas might have been unfairly dismissed. Cottas used the hyphenated term “aër-epitaphios” to refer to the object carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession as depicted in wall paintings. She debated the use of term with other scholars, but defended it as an appropriate term for the apparently transitional type of textile that looked like the modern epitaphios but was carried in the Great Entrance.⁷²

⁶⁹ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216–19.

⁷⁰ Cottas, “Contribution à l’étude de quelques tissus liturgiques,” 91–92.

⁷¹ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 219.

⁷² Amilka S. Alivizatou, “Aër-Epitaphios,” *Anaplasia* 47 (1934): 57–58; Cottas, “Contribution à l’étude de quelques tissus liturgiques,” 91–92, and note 10 on page 91.

Since I have not been able to trace another origin, it is possible that Cottas coined the term “aër-epitaphios,” at least in the sense she used it. It is certainly in the work of Cottas that we first find a systematic use of “aër-epitaphios” to refer to the largest cloth depicted in wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy. In many monastery churches, the Divine Liturgy appears in the program of wall painting found usually in the apse. The iconography, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2, is a procession of angels carrying liturgical implements. The last group of angels carries the “aër-epitaphion,” as Taft called it. Among the most well known examples is an eighteenth-century painting by George Markou at the Kaisariane Monastery, Athens (figures 105 and 106). The painting on the south wall of the apse shows the aër-epitaphios (figure 105). The late date of this painting could be attributed to a lingering iconographic tradition that no longer reflected actual liturgical practice, if it ever did. On the other hand, the painting might be evidence of just how long it took for the epitaphios to become completely distinct from the aër. The object in such paintings is not the cloth associated with Holy Saturday, and what its precise function might have been remains a matter of debate. Pauline Johnstone thought that such textiles were simply too large to be used as aëres, and she speculated that they were displayed in some other way, perhaps as wall hangings.⁷³

To make matters more confusing, Johnstone differentiated between the “liturgical epitaphios” and the “Good Friday epitaphios.”⁷⁴ Johnstone’s use of these terms, however, is the same as Cottas’ use of “aër-epitaphios” and “epitaphios” respectively. Johnstone also believed that what she referred to as the “liturgical epitaphios” was “distinct from the

⁷³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 26.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

great aër.”⁷⁵ Taft, however, thought that what he called the “aër-epitaphios” had the same function as the type of textile that Johnstone called the “great aër.” Taft therefore regarded “the large decorated veil depicted in the frescoes of the Great Entrance as the true aer that was used to cover the gifts.”⁷⁶ In other words, Taft identified the type of veil represented in paintings of the Divine Liturgy as what I will refer to simply as the “aër” throughout the rest of this study.

The terms we use to describe the textiles listed in Part II necessarily carry with them assumptions about the functions of those textiles. For practical reasons, however, it will be useful to use the familiar terms, but also to simplify the terminology, rather than to try to follow the examples offered by Cottas, Johnstone, Taft, or any other scholar. I will use the word “aër” to refer to the type of textile that covers both the diskos and chalice on the altar after the Great Entrance. I will use the word “epitaphios,” for the purposes of this study, to refer to the cloth that represents the dead Christ on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Although I agree with Taft that the objects shown in wall paintings as having been carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession was probably the cloth that covered the diskos and chalice on the altar, I will not use the term “aër-epitaphios” to refer exclusively to objects that might have been used in this way. While Taft and Cottas used the hyphenated term to refer to what was probably the great aër, I have chosen to use the term “aër-epitaphios” to refer to those objects that we cannot easily identify as one type or the other, objects that might, in fact, have had flexible functions.

My use of the term “aër-epitaphios” does not imply the existence of a third, distinct type of textile, as it did when Cottas used it. The distinction between my usage of

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216.

the term and how the term has been used before may be subtle, but it has to do with how and when *aëres* and *epitaphioi* developed into two separate types of liturgical textiles. We can refer to textiles that are clearly examples of one of the two distinct types with the terms “*aër*” and “*epitaphios*,” as the case may be, but I will reserve the term “*aër-epitaphios*” for examples that fall into the large category of textiles from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that cannot be identified securely either as *aëres* or as *epitaphioi*. I hope to demonstrate that the function of such textiles was flexible, so we need a term that takes that flexibility into account. This brings us to the subject of the next chapter: the respective functions of the *aër* and the *epitaphios* and the iconography found on those textiles.

Chapter 2: Function and Iconography

In this chapter I will examine the relationship between the functions of the textiles listed in the catalogue and the iconography used to decorate them. The iconography changed over time in response to changes in the liturgy. The iconography also became more “narrative” over time, a concept that I will explain in this chapter. I will continue to use the term “decorate,” but I use this word cautiously and only to mean that there are images embroidered on the textiles discussed. Hans Belting has written that these “images neither ‘illustrate’ a theme nor decorate a larger unit; rather, they have a well-defined object form.”¹ Belting was referring to images in several different media, especially icon paintings, but Belting’s point is that the image is not more or less important than the support to which it was applied, as would be the case for a Renaissance painting of the same subject. The image on an aër, an epitaphios, or another object used in the liturgy is also not a subsidiary part of a more important whole, as would be the case for an illumination that “illustrates” part of a narrative and “decorates” a manuscript. While I will disagree with some of the details of Belting’s observations about such objects, I do agree with Belting that these images, during the period discussed, “still do not possess autonomy as art, but they did have a status of their own.”² They still enjoy that status of their own in their natural habitat, the liturgy, even if the earliest examples have been retired from service and displayed in museum cases rather than on altars.

In a sense, for aëres and epitaphioi, the image is the object. While this sounds perhaps perilously close to a paraphrase of Marshall McLuhan’s famous dictum about the

¹ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 1.

² Ibid.

medium and the message, the point is only that the images on aëres and epitaphioi and the functions of those aëres and epitaphioi are inextricable. Aëres and epitaphioi were not always embroidered with images. The extensive use of embroidery on liturgical textiles seems to be a development of the late-Byzantine period. Images woven in silk do predate the earliest surviving embroidered textiles, and there is some evidence that embroidered images were part of liturgical textiles, even veils placed on the altar, much earlier than the earliest surviving examples. Paul the Silentiary referred to one in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople in the sixth century when he described a cloth that seems to have been partly embroidered.³ That passage will be discussed further in Chapter 3. At the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II) in 787, there was also discussion about the question of whether iconographic representations were appropriate on “altar-cloths or other veils.”⁴ Figural images on liturgical veils had been condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 754, but Nicaea II in 787 overturned that decision. It is certainly possible, then, that figural images were used on liturgical veils long before the period in which the oldest extant examples were made. By the early fourteenth century, however, the images on aëres and epitaphioi were indispensable parts of these textiles, and the iconography reflects developments in the liturgy that took place during the late-Byzantine period.

Before we examine the iconography embroidered on aëres and epitaphioi, however, it will be useful to consider representations of liturgical textiles in wall paintings. As with the terms used to identify the textiles, there are four important types of written evidence available to us in determining how the objects were used: liturgical

³ Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius und Prokopios von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit*, 249.

⁴ Daniel J. Sahas, ed. *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 150.

texts, commentaries on the liturgy, monastery inventories, and inscriptions on the textiles themselves. An additional category of evidence can be used for understanding how the textiles were used: the visual evidence of painted representations of the Divine Liturgy. Robert Taft has been skeptical of certain art historical methods for drawing conclusions about liturgical practice from the evidence of art.⁵ Nevertheless, Taft has taken wall paintings as evidence of how the Great Entrance might have looked during the late Byzantine period.⁶ Specifically, such paintings show participants in the Great Entrance carrying the type of textile that Cottas and Taft refer to as the “aër-epitaphios.” The figures with the aër-epitaphios, which I would prefer to call simply the “aër” or the “great aër,” appear at the end of the procession, as in a well-known painting at the Kaisariane Monastery in Athens (figure 105). Other figures in the procession carry other textiles, such as kalymmata and aëres. One figure in the Kaisariane painting wears what appears to be an aër on his back (figure 106). In modern practice the aër is indeed worn over the shoulder or draped on the back of the celebrant carrying the diskos.⁷ Descriptions of the Great Entrance in texts, such as a fifteenth-century Euchologion from the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, give similar instructions for how the deacon is to carry the aër draped from his forehead and down his back.⁸ The painting at Kaisariane and the Athonite Euchologion seem to confirm that modern practice is mostly similar to how the Great

⁵ Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence,” 86.

⁶ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 206–13, and note 117 on page 212.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ Dimitri E. Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Study of Late Byzantine Liturgical Chant* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1974), 36; Aleksei Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rukopisej*, 3 vols. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965. Original Publication Kiev and Saint Petersburg: Universiteta sv. Vladimira and V.F. Kirshbauma, 1895–1917), 609–10.

Entrance looked as early as the fifteenth century. The aspect of wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy that most perplexes scholars is the textile carried at the end of the procession.

Which of the textiles shown in paintings, like the one at Kaisariane, is the aër that covered the gifts on the altar? In paintings of the Divine Liturgy, there are figures wearing on their backs the kind of textile that, in modern practice, we would identify as the aër. Yet, there is also the large cloth carried over the heads of the figures at the end of the procession. Robert Taft thought that this large cloth was the aër.⁹ Other paintings add to the confusion by showing more than one celebrant wearing an aër on his back. The sixteenth-century painting of the Divine Liturgy at Dochiariou on Mount Athos (figures 107 and 108), for example, shows one deacon holding rhipidia and wearing an aër (figure 107). In the same painting, the next figure in the procession carries the diskos on his head and wears another aër on his back. The same pattern occurs in the sixteenth-century painting of the Divine Liturgy in the Church of St. Nicholas at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos (figures 109 and 110), except that the deacon holding rhipidia (figure 109) wears a cloth bearing the image of the Man of Sorrows (Akra Tapeinosis) rather than Christ as Amnos. The Man of Sorrows image shows a bust of the dead Christ, while the image of Christ as Amnos shows the dead Christ lying on a shroud or a stone slab. As in the painting of the Divine Liturgy at Dochiariou, other figures in the painting at the Great Lavra carry chalices. In the Dochiariou painting one figure holding a chalice also holds a kalymma on his head. Some chalices in the Dochiariou painting appear to be covered with kalymmata. Yet another figure stands in frontal pose and displays what appears to

⁹ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 218.

be a kalymma held in front of his body (figure 108). Are the cloths worn on the backs of the two deacons in the Dochiariou painting aëres or kalymmata? If they are aëres, then why are there two, and what was the function of the large cloth at the end of the procession? In the painting at the Great Lavra (figure 109), why do we find both the Man of Sorrows and Christ as Amnos? Are the textiles they decorate meant to be understood as having distinct liturgical functions?

I do not believe that these questions can be answered simply. First of all, we must keep in mind that there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between the textiles shown in the paintings and the textiles typically used today. There are several ways to consider the problem, including the possibility that the paintings simply show too many textiles. It is also possible that there really once were more types of textiles used in the Great Entrance than there are now, but some have been eliminated, or their functions and iconography have been conflated. The aëres worn on the back might not have been used to cover the gifts on the altar, as in modern practice, but were meant only as emblems to identify the deacons carrying or accompanying the bread on the diskos. On the other hand, if the textiles worn on the backs of the figures in these paintings really were aëres, then Pauline Johnstone might have been right to conclude that the large cloth shown at the end of the procession was not the cloth that covered the gifts on the altar.¹⁰ That conclusion, however, leaves us to wonder at just what point in history was this large cloth no longer called for during the Great Entrance.

We can also begin to ask, if we use such paintings as evidence, at what point the large cloth—the object that Cottas identified as the aër-epitaphios—had become part of

¹⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 26.

the Great Entrance in the first place. Among the earliest examples of the iconography of the Divine Liturgy is a painting in the dome of the Katholikon at Chilandar on Mount Athos (figure 111). In that painting, of which, according to Millet, the original plan could have been executed as early as 1299 but of which the present painting is probably much later, the depiction of the Divine Liturgy lacks the large veil carried at the end of the procession.¹¹ Did the artist simply omit it in this case, because it did not fit into the composition, or did the large veil develop only after this painting was first executed? While such paintings are necessarily among our best clues about how textiles were used, and while they can be interpreted as confirmation of the written sources, they cannot be regarded as definitive evidence. They raise more questions than they answer. There is the large veil carried at the end of the procession and there are also the other cloths that seem to be aëres in paintings of the Divine Liturgy. If one of the types of textiles shown in these paintings was the aër, then what was the function of the other textiles? It is not necessarily helpful to use modern practice as a guide. It is also not helpful to assume that practice was always consistent from one church to another. Robert Taft has shown how the liturgy developed toward greater uniformity, and Gabriel Bertonière has examined how that drive toward uniformity shaped the liturgy of Holy Week.¹² It is not necessary to assume either that the use of textiles was as uniform as it is today or that the use of textiles was always the same as it is today.

¹¹ Gabriel Millet, *Les Peintures*, vol. 1, Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1927), 61 and plate 64.1.

¹² Robert F. Taft, "Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Rite," *DOP* 42 (1988): 179–94; Gabriel Bertonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, vol. 193, *OrChrAn* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972).

We ought to consider the possibility that such paintings are not necessarily records, or representations, of what actually happened during any particular performance of the liturgy. They are, rather, explanations of the significance of the event. Certain wall paintings do show the Great Entrance—the actual procession that took place during the performance of the liturgy—but I would question whether this is a likeness of how the event would have looked from the point of view of the congregation in the late Byzantine period. While this type of painting does give us a general idea about the Great Entrance, they were actually meant not to show the performance of the Divine Liturgy as a service so much as to explain the significance of the service. They are representations of the Divine Liturgy as it is always taking place in Heaven. They are, in that sense, painted versions of the Cherubikon, the hymn sung during the Great Entrance:

Οἱ τὰ χερουβὶμ μυστικῶς εἰκονίζοντες καὶ τῇ ζωοποιῷ Τριάδι τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον προσάδοντες πᾶσαν νῦν βιωτικὴν ἀποθώμεθα μέριμναν, ὡς τὸν βασιλέα τὸν ὅλων ὑποδεξόμενοι ταῖς ἀγγελικαῖς ἀοράτως δορυφορούμενον τάξεσιν ἀλληλούια, ἀλληλούια, ἀλληλούια.

We who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of all invisibly escorted by the angelic orders. Allelouia, allelouia, allelouia.¹³

As the paintings suggest, those who perform the Great Entrance are not just imitating the cherubim. They actually participate in the essence of what they represent. Paintings of the Great Entrance, then, were meant to explain the liturgy, rather than to show how the actual performance of the liturgy looked in practice.

This approach to meaning in Orthodox Christian art is not unique to images of the Divine Liturgy or even to wall paintings. Mystagogic imagery also appears on the textiles

¹³ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 31; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 54.

used in the Great Entrance and actually helps us understand how the textiles the images decorate were meant to be used. Ultimately it was the Epitaphios Threnos, or Lamentation, that would become the standard iconography for both aëres and epitaphioi, but that narrative iconography was combined with the more liturgical, or mystagogic iconography of Christ as Amnos. In discussing the Epitaphios Threnos iconography it is possible to make a distinction between “narrative” iconography and “liturgical” iconography. By “narrative,” in this case, I mean images that show a scene from the narrative of the Passion. They may have liturgical significance, but they also “illustrate” a part of the story, as in the case of the Epitaphios Threnos. The Epitaphios Threnos is usually assumed to illustrate the Lamentation as described in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nikodemus.¹⁴ By “liturgical,” on the other hand, I mean images that are meant to explain a theological or liturgical idea, such as the Melismos. In most cases, the Epitaphios Threnos iconography on aëres and epitaphioi is a combination of “narrative” elements with “liturgical” iconography. There are a few exceptions. An aër-epitaphios of the Novgorod School (catalogue number 46, figure 77) and the sixteenth-century Bloomington Aër-Epitaphios (figure 96) present rare, purely “narrative” versions of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, as it might have appeared in a wall painting or on a painted icon. This leads us to the question of why the Epitaphios Threnos iconography replaced, or became mingled with, the iconography of Christ as Amnos on embroidered epitaphioi.

We ought to begin with an understanding of how the iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos developed in the first place. The most important discussion of this

¹⁴ Kurt Weitzmann, “The Origin of the Threnos,” (In *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, vol. 1, 476–90. Edited by Millard Meiss. New York: New York University Press, 1961), 476; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 39.

subject to date is Kurt Weitzmann's "The Origin of the Threnos."¹⁵ As Weitzmann argued, the Epitaphios Threnos iconography resulted from a gradual transformation of the iconography of the Entombment.¹⁶ Paintings such as the Entombment on the north wall of the naos in Hagioi Anargyroi, Kastoria, Greece (figure 112) show Christ being placed in the tomb by the Virgin, John, and Joseph of Arimathea. Part of the "second layer" of mural decoration (a "first layer" has been dated earlier) at Hagioi Anargyroi, the Entombment dates to the late eleventh century or early twelfth century.¹⁷ Although the twelfth-century painting of the Entombment on the north wall of the naos in St. Pantalaïmon, Nerezi (figure 113), is usually referred to as the Epitaphios Threnos, it presents essentially the same iconography as the painting in Hagioi Anargyroi, Kastoria. The two paintings appear in the same part of the church, the north wall of the naos. Once the iconography had developed fully into the Epitaphios Threnos, that scene would replace the Entombment, and it, too, would decorate some part of the north wall of the naos, or a space in the north transept or conch. The thirteenth-century painting of the Epitaphios Threnos in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now Saint Kliment), Ohrid, for example, is also on the north wall of the naos in that church (figure 103).

Maria G. Soteriou has proposed a different interpretation from Weitzmann's. Soteriou suggests that the two sets of iconography, Entombment and Threnos, developed together, and that the Threnos affected images of the Entombment.¹⁸ In Weitzmann's interpretations, the Entombment at Nerezi represents a step in the development from the

¹⁵ Weitzmann, "The Origin of the Threnos."

¹⁶ Ibid., 476.

¹⁷ Stylianos Pelekanidis and Manolis Chatzidakis, *Kastoria*, trans. Helen Zigada (Athens: Melissa, 1985), 28.

¹⁸ Maria G. Soteriou, "Entaphiasmos-Threnos," *DChAE* 7 (1973–1974): 139–48.

iconography at Hagioi Anargyroi, Kastoria, to the iconography at Ohrid. Changes in the iconography in the painting at Nerezi include the placing of the figure of Christ on the Virgin's lap. Soteriou's theory is probably a more accurate account of how the two types of iconography developed together, but Weitzmann is probably right to note that images of the Entombment came first. It is the more expressionistic style, a heightened emotion in the faces and poses of the figures, that has elicited the most scholarly interest in the painting at Nerezi, a style reinforces the interpretation of this painting as a version of the Epitaphios Threnos rather than the Entombment.¹⁹ The scene still includes the tomb at the left side of the composition, however, an element that was eventually eliminated from most versions of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. Additional figures would also be added to the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, including the myrrhophoroi (the myrrh-bearing women who visited Christ's tomb) and Nikodemus, all of which are present in the painting at Ohrid.

As Pauline Johnstone has explained, there are two basic variations on the Epitaphios Threnos iconography in embroidered textiles.²⁰ In the earlier type, the Virgin is shown bending over the body of Christ, as in the Nerezi Entombment or the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30). In the second type, the Virgin holds Christ's head in her lap, as in the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk (catalogue number 22, figure 43). Johnstone thought that an Aër-Epitaphios

¹⁹ Constantine P. Charalampidis, for example, followed André Grabar in regarding this painting as having "artistic, aesthetic and humanistic importance within the framework of the world history of art and civilization." Constantine P. Charalampidis, "The Importance of the Threnos in the Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi," *Cyrrillomethodianum* 3 (1975): 149; André Grabar, *La peinture byzantine. Étude historique et critique*. (Geneva, 1953), 143.

²⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 39.

from the Neamț Monastery, Moldavia (catalogue number 28, figure 50), dated 1436, was the earliest example of this second type of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography in embroidery, but she might have been mistaken since the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity and the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44) might have been made slightly earlier.

Kurt Weitzmann asserted that “profound changes in Byzantine more than any other art are never the result of mere formal considerations, but of new religious concepts, mainly dogmatic and liturgical, for which the painter tries to find an adequate artistic form.”²¹ Weitzmann was primarily concerned with manuscript illumination and wall paintings in his study of the development of the Threnos iconography. The iconography subsequently developed along slightly different lines once it began to appear on aëres and epitaphioi. Whether the arrangement of the iconography on an epitaphios has any relationship to the arrangement of the Eucharistic gifts on the altar is a question that requires further research, but it seems unlikely. The iconography of wall paintings such as that at Ohrid (paintings that depicted the “narrative” Epitaphios Threnos, rather than the paintings in the sanctuary that depicted the Divine Liturgy as “illustration” of the Cherubikon) probably served as the model for embroiderers, but the function of the textiles required another variation on the iconography, combining the Epitaphios Threnos iconography with the iconography of Christ as Amnos. Since Weitzmann provided us with a persuasive account of the origin of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, it will be

²¹ Weitzmann, “The Origin of the Threnos,” 477.

necessary here only to examine how the iconography developed, and what it came to mean, once it began to appear on aëres and epitaphioi.

The iconography on the earliest extant embroidered Byzantine aër or epitaphios, the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), shows the dead body of the adult Christ accompanied by angels, each angel in the role of deacon. The angels are recognizable as deacons because they carry rhipidia, which are liturgical fans, and because they wear oraria, which are the narrow stoles worn over the shoulder as the insignia of deacons. This iconography is related to the Melismos, an image of the body of Christ presented as the bread of the Eucharist. The Melismos iconography includes the diskos, which is the plate on which the bread is carried, and the asterisk, which is a star-shaped metal utensil that prevented the cloth from touching the bread. It also includes a kalymma, the cloth that was draped over the asterisk and diskos. “Melismos” refers to the “fraction” or “dissecting” of the sacrificial offering, the breaking of the bread, while the word “amnos” (lamb) refers specifically, in the liturgical context, to the consecrated portion of the Eucharistic bread.²² In paintings of the Melismos, the bread is represented by the figure of an infant Christ. Some paintings of the Melismos show an adult figure of Christ. Hans Belting has interpreted this tendency as a conflation of the Melismos with the image of Christ as the Sacrificial Lamb so that “both are united into a single image through the substitution of the dead Christ for the child without altering the composition of the Melismos.”²³

²² Robert F. Taft, “Fraction,” in *ODB*, vol. 2, 802; Robert F. Taft and Anthony Cutler, “Amnos,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 79.

²³ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 126.

The fourteenth-century painting in the north apse of the Markov Monastery, Serbia, shows Christ as an adult (figure 114), and this is the type of image that Belting cited as a combination of the Melismos and the Amnos. The earliest datable example of the Melismos iconography in wall painting is in the church of St. George at Kurbinovo (figure 115).²⁴ An inscription in the church tells us that the program was painted in 1191.²⁵ Interestingly, this painting shows Christ as ambiguously youthful, neither distinctly an infant nor distinctly an adult. In an early fourteenth-century painting in the church of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki, Christ is clearly shown as an infant (figure 116). The figure of Christ in the Melismos iconography is a kind of double symbol. The infant represents the bread of the Eucharist. The bread, in turn, is the body of Christ. Even though it is similar to the image of the Melismos at the Markov Monastery, the figure of Christ on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II can be described as the Amnos, rather than the Melismos, because the image lacks the asterisk and because the adult figure of Christ is accompanied by deacon-angels, as though Christ is already the consecrated Amnos rather than the Melismos awaiting dismemberment.

The image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3) is an example of what Belting has called the *Tuchbild*, or “cloth-borne image.”²⁶ I prefer to describe this iconography as “Christ as Amnos” because the image was not used exclusively on textiles. Belting has described the two types as “functionally different”

²⁴ Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 40.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁶ Hans Belting, *Das Bild und Sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1981), 189; Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 124.

although they have “closely related meanings.”²⁷ They are so closely related, in fact, that discerning a distinction between them can be difficult. Whether that difference is between the functions of the objects on which the images appear or the ideas to which the images refer is the point on which I disagree with Belting. I agree with Belting that the image of Christ as Amnos has a closely related meaning to the Melismos iconography. That relationship is the extent to which the two types of iconography can be described either as mystagogic—visually representing the theology behind aspects of the liturgy—or as having liturgical significance in the sense that it refers to the performance of the liturgy as a ritual. The Melismos and Christ as Amnos are two types of image that refer to separate ideas, and both images were used in wall paintings and on textiles. Rather than “functionally different,” however, the images are so close in meaning that they could be functionally the same.

Hans Belting has written that the “Melismos is a description of the performance of the sacrifice, while the cloth-borne image is a likeness of the Sacrificial Lamb lying in the grave.”²⁸ I believe that this is only partly correct. The Melismos, rather, explains the meaning of the bread and wine of the Eucharist. The “cloth-borne” image (i.e. the image of Christ as Amnos) refers to the performance of the liturgy, and to a specific point in the liturgy after the deposition of the gifts on the altar, when the Eucharistic bread is regarded as actually being the “Sacrificial Lamb lying in the grave.” The image in the Markov apse (figure 114) is a combination of the two distinct sets of iconography, but the pure version of the image of Christ as Amnos (i.e. without the diskos, asterisk, or kalymma) was not used only on aëres or epitaphioi. Before examining more closely the problems that result

²⁷ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 126.

²⁸ Ibid.

from Belting's argument, it will be useful to understand the intended meaning of the Melismos as a type of image.

Sharon Gerstel has persuasively argued that the appearance of the Melismos iconography around the end of the twelfth century is not a coincidence.²⁹ The development of the image probably reflects the need to illustrate the results of a theological debate about the Eucharistic offering. The question of whether the bread was a "type" of Christ or the actual body of Christ was addressed at synods in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³⁰ The synod in 1082 anathematized "those who say that the communion of the body and precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a communion of ordinary bread and wine."³¹ Nevertheless, in the fourteenth century Nicholas Cabasalis still felt compelled to explain the issue:

Now let us see whether the liturgy is a real sacrifice, and not just a representation. The sacrificing of a sheep consists in a changing of its state; it is changed from an unsacrificed sheep to a sacrificed one. The same is true here; the bread is changed from unsacrificed bread into something sacrificed. In other words, it is changed from the ordinary unsacrificed bread into that very Body of Christ which was truly sacrificed.³²

We need not dwell on the type of rhetoric that Cabasalis used to construct his argument. The important point to note here is that Cabasalis, in explaining the meaning of the Eucharist, also demonstrated why the Melismos iconography had been added to the program of church decoration: the image illustrates what the Eucharistic offering is actually meant to be. It makes explicit the Orthodox view that the bread and wine do not

²⁹ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 44–47.

³⁰ Ibid., 46.

³¹ Ibid; Jean Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de L'orthodoxie: Édition Et Commentaire," *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967): 68–69, ll. 366–67.

³² Nicholas Cabasalis, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J.M. Hussey and P.A. McNulty (London: S.P.C.K., 1960), 81.

merely symbolize Christ but actually are the body and blood of Christ. Such paintings were confined to the sanctuary where they might be concealed from the view of the congregation by icons and curtains. Transferred to the embroidered veil, the kalymma that covered the diskos, the Melismos was carried among the congregation to whom the image revealed the significance of what was concealed by the textile on which the image was embroidered.

The iconography of Christ as Amnos is, as Hans Belting has observed, closely related to the Melismos iconography. The function of the “cloth-borne image” is not, however, “understandable only from the function and symbolism of the cloth” as Belting described it.³³ What Belting proposed is that the image of Christ as Amnos appears on aëres precisely because the cloth itself was understood to stand in for the shroud of Christ during the performance of the liturgy.³⁴ Belting is not incorrect, but his conclusions are too narrow. While the image of Christ as Amnos is a reference to Christ lying on the shroud, the image also resembles what would actually take place at the altar after the Great Entrance. In this way, the iconography of Christ as Amnos is closer in what it represents to images of the Divine Liturgy than it is to images of the Melismos. Nevertheless, the image of Christ as Amnos and the image of the Melismos were close enough to be interchangeable on textiles. They were certainly close enough to be conflated as they were in the wall painting in the Markov Monastery (figure 114).

Embroidered versions of the Melismos, in more or less the same form as we find it at the church of St. Nicholas Orphanos (figure 116), have been used to decorate the aëres that cover the paten and chalice together on the altar, as on a sixteenth-century

³³ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 126.

³⁴ Ibid.

example at the Benaki Museum in Athens (figure 117). I believe that this example in Benaki Museum was meant to be used as a great aër. Its size and shape suggest that it was meant to cover both the diskos and chalice on the altar. This is far from certain, however, and while Pauline Johnstone categorized it as an aër, she meant the term in the sense of “little aër,” which is simply another term for kalymma. It may be argued that this object was actually intended to be used as a kalymma. In fact the Melismos has been embroidered on many kalymmata meant to cover the diskos during the Great Entrance, such as a seventeenth-century diskokalymma at the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia (figure 101). Here the meaning of the image is clear. It identifies the bread of the Eucharist as the body of Christ.

Another type of iconography, the Communion of the Apostles, can also appear on both kalymmata and aëres. We find it on the Halberstadt kalymmata (figures 93 and 94), among many other examples of kalymmata. We also find it on two extant aëres of the fifteenth century (catalogue number 25, figure 46; and catalogue number 43, figure 67). While I hesitate to draw conclusions about the intended function of a liturgical textile from the evidence of its size, I think that these two examples are actually too large to have been used as kalymmata. We also find the term “aër” (written as “ВЪЗДУХ” on catalogue number 25, and abbreviated as “ВЪЗДХ” on catalogue number 43) used in the inscriptions on both examples to identify what each cloth is. These two Russian textiles were aëres, veils that covered the Eucharistic offerings on the altar after the Great Entrance. The Communion of the Apostles was regarded, at least by those responsible for these examples, as interchangeable with the image of Christ as Amnos. This iconography was also used interchangeably with the Melismos on kalymmata. We can therefore safely

regard the Communion of the Apostles, the Melismos, and Christ as Amnos as a set of related images, or a set of images with related or overlapping meanings used on objects of related, if distinct, functions.

Yet another related type of image is the Man of Sorrows. This iconography is also identified with the Greek title Akra Tapeinosis (“ἡ ἄκρα ταπείνωσις” or “the peak of humiliation”).³⁵ This is the portrait of the dead Christ, which Hans Belting argued was actually used, in the form of portable panel icons, in the performance of the liturgy on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.³⁶ Belting also referred to this iconography as the “Passion portrait,” and he has cited an inscription on the back of one example as evidence of its use, and of the general use of icons of the Passion portrait, during the Passion liturgy. The example in question is one of a pair, a diptych at the Monastery of the Transfiguration at Meteora, Greece, of which the other icon is an image of the lamenting Virgin (figure 118). On the backs of both icons is a set of instructions written in what Belting identified as “an eighteenth-century script.”³⁷ The inscription on the back of the Akra Tapeinosis reads, “On the Holy and Great Saturday, this old founder’s icon of Christ is to be stood on the *epitaphios* together with the icon of the Mother of God.”³⁸ Belting is correct to cite this as an example of how the Akra Tapeinosis iconography was closely related to the rites of Holy Saturday. We may also assume that this iconography was regarded by the author of the instructions as closely related to the iconography that

³⁵ Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, “Man of Sorrows,” in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1287.

³⁶ See especially Hans Belting, “An Image and Its Function in the Liturgy: The Man of Sorrows in Byzantium,” *DOP* 34 (1980–1981): 7–8; Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 109.

³⁷ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 109.

³⁸ The inscription on the back of the icon of the Virgin reads, “On the Holy and Great Saturday, this old founder’s icon of Mary is to be stood on the *epitaphios* together with the icon of Christ.” The italics are Belting’s. Ibid.

decorated the epitaphios. It is perhaps going too far, however, to conclude, as Belting did because of the inscription on this diptych, that the “function of the Passion portrait in the Passion liturgy of Holy Week has been demonstrated.”³⁹

Robert Taft found fault with Belting’s methods, and I agree with Taft that the evidence is not sufficient to support Belting’s claims about the use of icons in the performance of the liturgy.⁴⁰ However, I do agree with Belting that the Man of Sorrows was another type of image related to the Melismos and Christ as Amnos. In icon painting, the Man of Sorrows is probably the most common iconography of the dead Christ. Painted portable icons of the Epitaphios Threnos, Deposition, and Entombment are rare by comparison with icons of the Man of Sorrows. We do not have examples of this precise image type on embroidered textiles, but the sixteenth-century painting of the Divine Liturgy at the Saint Nicholas church at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos, shows one figure wearing draped over his shoulders a textile decorated with the image of the Man of Sorrows (figure 109). Is this textile functionally the same or different from the textile worn by the next figure in the procession on which we find the image of Christ as Amnos? There are parallel images in other wall paintings, such as the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos (figure 107). In this painting we find that the two figures wearing aëres on their backs are both sporting the iconography of Christ as Amnos. This suggests that the iconography of the Man of Sorrows was interchangeable with the iconography of Christ as Amnos, at least in the mind of the painter, or the designer of the program, of the Divine Liturgy at the Great Lavra.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence,” 86.

Several scholars, including Nancy Ševčenko, have also claimed that the Man of Sorrows was used on epitaphioi.⁴¹ Although she did not cite a specific example, Ševčenko probably had in mind the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figures 5–7). While the image on that textile is similar to the Man of Sorrows, it shows a full-length figure of Christ with Christ’s head erect, as though the figure is actually lying on the cloth on which the image is embroidered. Belting wrote that this image type, specifically the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin “stands in a causal relationship with the Passion portrait.”⁴² That statement probably goes too far, and Belting seems to have contradicted himself in the same study when he wrote that the “cloth-borne image may have played a role for later variants of the iconic Passion portrait, but cannot have been its prototype, as Pallas believes.”⁴³ Belting’s main point, however, is that the image of Christ as Amnos has a specific liturgical meaning and function distinct from the image of the Man of Sorrows. The Pallas in question, with whom Belting disagreed, is none other than Demetrios Pallas, and I agree with Belting that Pallas was wrong on this point. The two types of image are related, and may have common sources, but they are also somewhat different, and they developed independently. The difference in the details of the iconography would certainly have been recognizable to the clergy who used these objects, and to the laity, but the differences do not mean that the images are unrelated.

⁴¹ Ševčenko, “Man of Sorrows,” 1287.

⁴² Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 99.

⁴³ Ibid., 127; Demetrios I. Pallas, *Die Passion und Bestattung Christi in Byzanz: der Ritus, das Bild* ([Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 2]. Munich: Institut für Byzantistik und neugriechische Philologie der Universität, 1965), 251.

More closely related are the variants of the image of Christ as Amnos that began to appear on aër-epitaphioi at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Hans Belting regarded the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin as a different type of the cloth-borne image from the iconography found on examples like the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3).⁴⁴ The image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin seems intended to imitate the body of Christ lying on the shroud. It is one of only two examples like this. The other is the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8). The actual cloth itself represents the shroud in these examples. The image lacks a further representation of a shroud on which the figure of Christ lies. In this sense, as an image of Christ lying on the shroud, the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin is closer to the image of Christ as Amnos than it is to the Melismos or the Man of Sorrows.

Belting also regarded the *Tuchbild*, or Christ as Amnos, such as the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II, as a different type of image from the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, but he did so specifically because he saw the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin as a reproduction of the Shroud of Turin (figures 119 and 120) with the added detail of a kalymma partially covering the figure of Christ.⁴⁵ Citing not only the lack of scenic context on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin but the presence of the kalymma covering the figure of Christ, Belting concluded that the image is “thereby changed from a mere reproduction of the historical original to a symbolic image of the Sacrificial Lamb of the liturgy.” With the phrase “historical

⁴⁴ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 99.

⁴⁵ This is a commonplace in scholarship about epitaphioi. See Appendix A. Ibid., 126.

original,” Belting meant the Turin Shroud. With this image, Belting argued, “the Amnos Aer ultimately became a likeness of what, up to that time, it had only signified: a likeness of Christ’s shroud.”⁴⁶ In one sense, Belting is right, because the image, like many images of Christ as Amnos, shows Christ on a shroud. This would become even more explicit as the images on aëres and epitaphioi began to include elements of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography.

The image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin cannot, however, have been inspired by the specific relic that we now refer to as the “Turin Shroud” if only because the Turin Shroud did not yet exist, as discussed in Appendix A. The images on aëres and epitaphioi do refer to the shroud, but what they refer to is the sindon mentioned in the Gospels, not the Turin Shroud. There seems to have been another, possibly similar relic in Constantinople up to the time of the Fourth Crusade. Robert of Clari’s account of the Fourth Crusade includes a passage in which he mentions a “*sydoine*” at the Church of the Blachernae in Constantinople:

Et entre ches autres en eut un autre des moustiers que on apeloit medame Sainte Marie de Blakerne, ou li sydoines, la ou Nostres Sires fu envelopés, i estoit, qui cascuns des venres se drechoit tous drois, si que on i pooit bien vier le figure Nostre Seigneur, ne ne seut on onques, ne Griu, ne Francois, que chis sydoines devint quant le vile fu prise.⁴⁷

(And among the rest, there was another of the churches which they called My Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae, where was kept the *sydoine* in which Our Lord had been wrapped, which stood up straight every Friday so that the features of Our Lord could be plainly seen there. And no one, either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this *sydoine* after the city was taken.⁴⁸)

⁴⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁴⁷ Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: É. Champion, 1924), 90.

⁴⁸ Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal, Records of Western Civilization (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. First published 1936), 112.

It is not clear which relic it was that Robert of Clari described, but it is usually taken to be a relic of the same type as the Turin Shroud, and some writers have used this passage as evidence that the Turin Shroud was in Constantinople before the Fourth Crusade.⁴⁹ Regardless of which relic Robert of Clari actually saw, if it was a relic, it is tempting to think of it as a kind of proto-epitaphios, the relic to which all aëres and epitaphioi were meant to refer. Whether that relic, or any other relic, had anything to do with the development of the iconography of Christ as Amnos is, however, a question that cannot be answered.

Hans Belting has also raised another possibility that I believe is a mistake. Belting used certain instances of the image of Christ as Amnos to argue about the origins of the epitaphios as a type of liturgical object. The image appears on objects in other media at earlier dates than the earliest known embroidered images of Christ as Amnos. According to Belting, such objects prove the existence of the aër embroidered with the image of Christ as Amnos before the period to which the earliest extant examples actually belong.⁵⁰ There is nothing implausible about the possibility that the earliest extant examples are not the earliest examples that were ever made. We ought to assume that this is probably true. But the evidence that Belting has used is not adequate for a convincing argument. Belting's argument depends on images that show the figure of Christ on a shroud. Since these images can be dated to a period before the fourteenth century, Belting reasoned, then textiles decorated with this iconography must also have predated the

⁴⁹ See Appendix A.

⁵⁰ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 124.

fourteenth century.⁵¹ The question is whether such images represent textiles decorated with the Amnos iconography or are simply instances of the Amnos iconography in other media.

A composite reliquary in the Hermitage, for example, is one of the objects cited as evidence for the use of embroidered aëres as early as the twelfth century.⁵² The reliquary comprises several pieces of different dates (figure 121).⁵³ One of the cloisonné pieces that make up the reliquary, a small enamel piece just below the crucifixion in the center, shows the figure of Christ lying on a shroud between two angels (figure 122). Above the figure of Christ is an inscription. The inscription has been transcribed and translated in quite different ways. Gustave Schlumberger gave this interpretation: “ΧΣ ΠΠΟ’ΚΕΙΤΑΙ (*sic*) Κ’ (pour ΚΑΙ) ΣΗΜΥΖΕΤΑΙ (?) ΘΕ (pour ΘΕΟΣ), *Christ est couché et il se manifeste Dieu*.”⁵⁴ Alisa Bank transcribed and translated the inscription as “Χ[ριστο]ς πρό[σ]κειται κ[αὶ] σημύζεται θε[ός] (‘Christ did die, and did come as the Lord’).”⁵⁵ Hans Belting read the inscription as “‘Christ is presented here as an offering and also participates in the godhead’ (ΧΡ πρόκειται καὶ μετέξεται θεῷ).”⁵⁶ None of these

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ A. V. (Alisa Vladimirovna) Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of the USSR* (Leningrad and Moscow: Soviety Khudozhnik, 1966), 364–65; Gustave Schlumberger, “Un Tableau reliquaire byzantin inédit du Xe siècle,” *Monuments et Memoires* 1 (1894): 99.

⁵⁴ The “sic” is Schlumberger’s. Schlumberger, “Un Tableau reliquaire byzantin,” 103.

⁵⁵ Bank, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of the USSR*, 364.

⁵⁶ There is actually what appears to be a typographical error in the English edition of Belting’s book. In the German edition, the second verb in the inscription is transcribed as “μετέξεται.” In the English edition, it is given as “μετέζεται.” Belting, *Das Bild*, 191; Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 124.

transcriptions is completely satisfactory, but all three translations express essentially the same sentiment: Christ is a manifestation of God and is presented as a sacrifice.

Hans Belting's transcription is especially intriguing, however, because of the verb “μετέξεται.” If Belting's interpretation is correct, the verb, which means “participates,” seems to hark back to the period of the Iconoclasm. In eighth-century arguments about images, the point was often made that an image “participates” with the substance, or hypostasis, of the person represented. This made it possible to conclude, as the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 787 did conclude, that “he who venerates the icon venerates the hypostasis of the person depicted on it” rather than the object itself.⁵⁷ Perhaps the inscription on this tiny cloisonné image can be taken as one of the many pieces of evidence that the Iconoclasm had a lasting effect on Byzantine art. On the other hand, it might be a simple statement of a related Neoplatonic idea about the nature of Christ. For example, in a passage from his eighth-century defense of images, John of Damascus wrote:

Ὡςπερ γὰρ τῷ πυρὶ ἐνούμενος ὁ σίδηρος οὐ τῇ φύσει, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐνώσει καὶ πυρώσει καὶ μεθέξει πῦρ γίνεται, οὕτω καὶ τὸ θεούμενον οὐ τῇ φύσει ἀλλὰ τῇ μεθέξει θεὸς γίνεται. Οὐ τὴν σάρκα φημὶ τοῦ σαρκωθέντος υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐκείνη γὰρ τῇ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἐνώσει καὶ μεθέξει τῆς θείας φύσεως ἀτρέπτως θεὸς ἐχρημάτισεν, οὐκ ἐνεργείᾳ χρισθεῖσα θεοῦ ὥσπερ τῶν προφητῶν ἕκαστος, παροθσία δὲ ὅλου τοῦ χρίοντος.⁵⁸

Just as something in contact with fire becomes fire not by its own nature, but by being united, burned, and mingled with fire, so it is also, I say, with the assumed flesh of the Son of God. By union with His person, that flesh participates in the divine nature and by this communion becomes unchangeably God; not only by the

⁵⁷ Sahas, ed. *Icon and Logos*, 179.

⁵⁸ P. Bonifatius Kotter, ed. *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*, vol. 3, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 95.

operation of divine grace, as was the case with the prophets, but by the coming of grace Himself.⁵⁹

This idea (that the flesh of Christ participates in the divine nature) is related to the meaning of the image of Christ in the cloisonné piece at the Hermitage, no matter how we transcribe the inscription. The association with the shroud—the textile shown in the image—makes the image a reference to Christ’s “assumed flesh,” which is necessary for the Eucharist to make sense.

Cloth, as Sharon Gerstel has argued, has theological and liturgical associations with the flesh of Christ.⁶⁰ The most obvious connection between cloth and the flesh of Christ is the sindon itself, the shroud in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Christ. Another important, specific relic for understanding this connection is the Mandyllion, a supposed acheiropoietos that showed the face of Christ. Ernst von Dobschütz discussed it in his treatment of legends about images of Christ.⁶¹ Averil Cameron has done some of the most important, recent work on the legends about this miraculous image.⁶² The Mandyllion itself is the stuff of legend, and some of those legends are contradictory, but the story of its origin is well known. The Mandyllion is a cloth that was sent to Abgar, the ailing king of Edessa in lieu of a personal visit from

⁵⁹ John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 27.

⁶⁰ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 68–77.

⁶¹ Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder. Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, vol. 18 (Neue Folge, 3. Bd.), Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur Band (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1899), 102–96.

⁶² See especially Averil Cameron, “The History of the Image of Edessa: The Telling of a Story,” in *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students*, ed. Cyril A. Mango, Omeljan Pritsak, and Uliana M. Pasicznyk (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1984), 80–94; Averil Cameron, “The Sceptic and the Shroud. *Inaugural Lecture at King’s College, London, April, 1980*,” in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 3–27.

Christ.⁶³ Christ pressed a plain cloth to his face, and a miraculous image appeared on the cloth. The cloth was sent to Abgar, and Abgar was cured. The image of the Mandylion (a face on a cloth) became an important subject for icons and wall paintings. It can be seen the sanctuaries of several churches, such the fourteenth-century paintings in the sanctuary of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki (figure 123). In that same program is an image of the Melismos showing the infant Christ partially covered with a kalymma. We therefore have two textiles represented in the same program. One, the Mandylion, shows that Christ was both flesh and divine. The other, the kalymma, covers the infant Christ, which represents the Eucharistic offering.

We can also find a version of the Mandylion embroidered on the fourteenth-century Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia (catalogue number 14, figure 29). This is a unique example among extant aëres of the Mandylion used in place of the image of Christ as Amnos. It has been suggested that the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia was used as a hanging and not as an aër.⁶⁴ It might also commemorate a military victory. The Mandylion was often used on battle flags, and Natalija Mayasova suggests that this aër commemorates Dmitrii Donskoi's 1380 victory over the Mongols at Kulikovo.⁶⁵ As Hans Belting has reminded us, the Mandylion was used on Russian and Bulgarian battle

⁶³ In some versions of the legend, it was only a letter from Christ to Abgar. The image is attached to the legend only later. Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Mandylion," in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1282; Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, 102–03.

⁶⁴ Helen C. Evans, ed. *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 319, note 1.

⁶⁵ Nataliia Andreevna Mayasova, "Pamiatnik moskovskogo zolotnogo shit'ia XV veka," in *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: khudozhestvennaia kul'tura Moskvy i prilezhashchikh k nei kiazhestv. XIV-XVI vv.*, ed. Olga I. Podobedova (Moscow: Isdatelstvo nauka, 1970), 491.

flags even as late as World War I (figure 124).⁶⁶ The Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia is identified as an aër in the inscription around its border, however, and the use of the image of the Mandylion on an aër should not surprise us. As Sharon Gerstel has noted, “the veil is linked to the flesh of Christ just as the Mandylion is linked with the Incarnation and Sacrifice of that flesh.”⁶⁷ The image of the Mandylion refers to the same idea about the nature of Christ as does the image of Christ lying on a shroud.

We may add the image of the Mandylion to our list of iconography associated with liturgical textiles. In Rome, the more famous relic was the veil of Veronica, another cloth with a miraculous image of Christ’s face. A lost textile bearing the image of Christ as Amnos was associated with the ciborium where the Veronica acheiropietos was kept (catalogue number 16a, figures 32 and 33).⁶⁸ This is another instance of the association of an acheiropietos with the image of Christ as Amnos. For the Byzantine Church, the Mandylion was a literally central image, appearing in or above the sanctuary in painted programs of church decoration. It was, however, the image of Christ as Amnos that became the first standard iconography for aëres. The question of when that happened is difficult to answer.

⁶⁶ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art.*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 215.

⁶⁷ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 76.

⁶⁸ The only evidence for the existence of this object are a description and a drawing made by Giacomo Grimaldi in the early seventeenth century. Giacomo Grimaldi, *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicæ sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veratione asservatis* (Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 (1618); Florence Bib. Naz. II-III-173 (1620); Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf. (1621); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 8404 (1628); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 6439 (1635); Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 bis (posthumous)).

I have already mentioned that Hans Belting attempted to prove the existence of the aër embroidered with the image of Christ as Amnos before the period to which the earliest extant examples actually belong.⁶⁹ The Hermitage reliquary (figures 121–122) was one piece of evidence adduced in his argument. A very early wall painting of the same iconography is another. The image is to be found in the sanctuary of the twelfth-century Church of Zoodochos Pege, Samari, Messenia, Greece (figure 125). Sharon Gerstel has also described this painting as representing an epitaphios.⁷⁰ It might be an image of an epitaphios; or it might be an image of the body of Christ on the shroud, just another instance of the Christ as Amnos iconography. The inscription above the image is taken from John 6:56: “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”⁷¹ The inscription reminds us that the image of Christ on the shroud refers to the flesh of Christ and, in turn, to the meaning of the Eucharist. The fact that the image at Samari includes a shroud should not, however, be taken to mean necessarily that the image represents an aër or an epitaphios. What it shows us is the body of Christ on the shroud.

One more type of textile that must be considered in this discussion of the types of image we can find on early aëres and epitaphioi is the antimension (ἀντιμήνσιον). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the antimension is the cloth that is spread on the altar table before anything else is placed on the altar.⁷² In the Byzantine rite, the antimension is, strictly speaking, the altar itself. This type of liturgical textile replaced the eiliton as the

⁶⁹ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 124.

⁷⁰ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 76.

⁷¹ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 124; Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 76.

⁷² Gonosová, “Antimension,” 112; Papas, “Liturgische Tücher,” 780–84.

cover for the altar. It has its origins in the exigencies of the Early Christian period when the antimimension was intended as a portable consecrated altar to be used only when another consecrated altar was unavailable, and the earliest reference to the antimimension dates to the eighth century.⁷³ During the post-Byzantine period, use of the antimimension became mandatory.⁷⁴ In its form, an antimimension is only a plain linen cloth with a pouch for relics. A number of scholarly and theological studies have discussed the antimimension, although art historians have not studied antimensia as much as they have studied other types of liturgical textiles.⁷⁵ The antimimension is relevant here because of the iconography found on antimensia. Again, it is difficult to know when images were first added to antimensia. It seems, however, that antimensia were the last of the types of liturgical textiles that I have mentioned so far to be decorated with images of Christ as Amnos and the Epitaphios Threnos.⁷⁶ Once images were added to antimensia, however, the iconography on antimensia emulated aëres and epitaphioi. The earliest examples usually had only simple decoration. The simple cross on a sixteenth-century example at

⁷³ Gonosová, “Antimimension,” 112.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ P. Agathonos, “To Antimimension. Symbole eis ten meleten tes latreias tes orthodoxou Anatolikes Ekklesias” (PhD dissertation, Leukosia, 1999); Paramythias Athenagorou, “Oligai lexeis peri antimimension,” *Ekklesiastike Aletheia* 37 (1918): 12–13; Vladimir Christy, “The Antimimension Its History, Practice and Theology” (PhD dissertation, St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1979); Januarius M. Izzo, *The Antimimension in the Liturgical and Canonical Tradition of the Byzantine and Latin Churches: An Inter-Ritual Inter-Confessional Study* (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1975); Edward Kasinec, Bohdan A. Struminsky, and Januarius M Izzo, *Byzantine-Ruthenian Antimensia in the Episcopal and Heritage Institute Libraries of the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Passaic* ([Passaic, New Jersey]: EHI [Episcopal and Heritage Institute] Libraries, 1981); K. Lübeck, “Das Antimimension der Griechen,” *Der Katholik* 96 (1916): 396–415; K. Nikolskij, *On the Antimimension of the Russian Orthodox Church*. (1872); S. Petrides, “L’antimimension,” *Échos d’Orient* 3 (1899–1900): 193–202; A. Raes, “Antimimension, Tablit, Tabot,” *Proche-Orient chrétien* 1 (1951): 59–70.

⁷⁶ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 217.

Simonopetra, Mount Athos, is typical of the earliest decorated antimensia (figure 87). An eighteenth-century antimension from Stavronikita, Mount Athos, is decorated with an image of the Man of Sorrows (figure 86).

The Epitaphios Threnos iconography was eventually also used to decorate antimensia. While a few were painted, antimensia were usually decorated with prints. One eighteenth-century printed antimension shows a variation of the iconography of Christ as Amnos in which angels hold the shroud around the figure of Christ (figure 85).⁷⁷ This image calls special attention to the significance of textiles for the liturgy. Perhaps because of the use of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, some embroidered epitaphioi (or aëres) have been mistaken for antimensia. A sixteenth-century Epitaphios from Asia Minor now at the Benaki Museum in Athens (Museum number 34680—figure 126) is still identified as an antimension in the museum’s display. The identification of this embroidered aër-epitaphios as an antimension is attributable to Eugenia Vei Chatzidaki.⁷⁸ This is not, however, the only example of this type of error that I have encountered.⁷⁹

At least, I believe this is an error. I have found no embroidered textiles that can be definitely identified as antimensia. The possibility remains that Eugenia Vei Chatzidaki and others who have identified certain embroidered textiles as antimensia are correct. While an embroidered textile certainly could be used as an antimension, antimensia did also require a reliquary pouch. It is possible that some embroidered aëres that had

⁷⁷ This example is Ruthenian, i.e. Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic. Kasinec, Struminsky, and Izzo, *Byzantine-Ruthenian Antimensia*, 10–11.

⁷⁸ Chatzidaki, *Ekklesiastika kentemata Mouseiou Benake*, 8.

⁷⁹ See also Germaine Merlange, “An Antimensium of the Greek Orthodox Church,” *Bulletin Metropolitan Museum of Art* 24, no. 9 (September 1929): 233–36.

become worn were salvaged and consecrated for reuse as antimensia. An embroidered image would probably make such a textile impractical for use as an altar covering since other objects, including the diskos and chalice, would be placed on top of it. Embroidery is a more expensive medium for decorating a textile, and only the clergy who placed it on the altar before covering it with other textiles would see an antimension. The painted and printed images on most antimensia are simply more practical for an object meant to be used in the way antimensia are used. Whether embroidered textiles ever were used as antimensia is a question that calls for further research.

Regardless of whether some antimensia have been decorated with embroidered images, the iconography on objects that are undoubtedly antimensia confirm what we have seen so far. The Man of Sorrows, the Mandyllion, the Melismos, Christ as Amnos, and also, eventually, the Epitaphios Threnos make up a set of related images. Each of these has been used on a liturgical textile, but it was the image of Christ as Amnos that became the earliest standard iconography on aëres. Early examples include the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), the Aër-Epitaphios at the Stavronikita Monastery (catalogue number 10, figure 23), and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Bachkovo Monastery (catalogue number 11, figure 24). All three examples were probably made during the fourteenth century. While the image on these examples is purely “liturgical,” several other fourteenth-century aër-epitaphioi already reveal the effects of the “narrative” Epitaphios Threnos iconography that decorated church walls. Both the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figures 10 and 13) and the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (catalogue number 6, figures 17–18), for example,

include lamenting angels hovering above the figure of Christ in addition to the usual deacon-angels.

It was only during the fourteenth century, as Hans Belting has observed, that the Holy Saturday ritual of the Epitaphios Threnos finally began to take shape as the ritual we recognize today.⁸⁰ We might expect the epitaphios, as a type of specialized liturgical textile, to have made its appearance during that century, but it is difficult to determine from the evidence of the textiles themselves whether there was actually a differentiation between aër and epitaphios. Some textiles that have been called epitaphioi might actually have been aëres. One of the earliest extant aër-epitaphioi is also one of the most perplexing. The early fourteenth-century Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figures 5–7) has been the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny, much of it dealing with the question of just how the object was used. The image embroidered on the textile seems to imitate the actual shroud of Christ, the “historical shroud” as Belting called it.⁸¹ The figure of Christ is posed frontally, as though the body rests on the textile itself rather than being represented as resting on a shroud shown within the composition. This seems to be just the type of cloth we see carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession in wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy.

Most scholars have assumed, however, that the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin was an epitaphios, rather than an aër, probably because of its size. Recognizing its uniqueness, Pauline Johnstone called it “the most severely ‘liturgical’ of all the

⁸⁰ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 101.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

existing epitaphioi.”⁸² From what we have observed so far, the term “epitaphios” might be inappropriate for the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, as Hans Belting has noted.⁸³ If we look closely, however, we notice that the figures of Christ on the aëres carried in the paintings of the Divine Liturgy—such as the sixteenth-century painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos (figure 108)—are actually presented in slight profile. This is how the figure of Christ is shown on several fourteenth-century aëres. The Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21) and the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19) are closer matches with what we see in wall paintings than is the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Is this slight difference in iconography significant? If it is, then what is the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin? Is it an aër or an epitaphios? Is that distinction even appropriate for an object made during the early fourteenth century?

There is another difference between the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and the aër-epitaphioi at the Vatopedi and Pantokrator monasteries. The figure of Christ on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin is shown covered with another cloth, not the loincloth worn by Christ on the aër-epitaphioi of the Vatopedi and Pantokrator monasteries or in narrative scenes of the Epitaphios Threnos. It is, rather, an aër of the type shown covering the figure of Christ in paintings of the Melismos. Perhaps we should call the cloth represented in this image a “kalymma,” but Hans Belting refers to it as the “Amnos aer,” citing Symeon of Thessaloniki as his source for the term.⁸⁴ The meaning of

⁸² Johnstone was probably unaware of the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios. Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 118.

⁸³ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 99.

⁸⁴ Symeon of Thessaloniki, “Peri ton Hieron Cheirotoneion,” 385; Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 245–46, note 20.

the veil in this image is clear, regardless of what we might call it. It is a liturgical veil used to cover the Eucharistic offering.

The image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin is, therefore, a variation of the Melismos iconography with an adult figure of Christ. The textile itself shares its function with the veil represented in the embroidered image. In other words, the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin was a veil for use during the Great Entrance, and it was not specifically, or exclusively, an epitaphios for use during Holy Week, if that distinction can be made for such an early textile. The association of the kalymma with the aër is not unique to the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) is a combination of the figure of Christ as Amnos with the Communion of the Apostles. This aër-epitaphios is like a triptych of three panels, with an aër in the middle and kalymmata on either side. The images make the function of the cloth explicit by associating the cloth with the communion. The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figure 1) also reinforces the association of the Communion of the Apostles, and the function of kalymmata, with the figure of Christ as Amnos, and the function of the aër, because it had been repaired with a kalymma. At some point before the disappearance of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II during the Balkan Wars, the damaged figure of Mark in the lower left corner had been replaced with a kalymma decorated with the Communion of the Apostles. Conservation at the museum of Sophia involved the removal of that kalymma (figure 4) from the aër-epitaphios.

Belting was probably right to identify the cloth represented as covering the figure of Christ in the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin as the same type of

veil that covers the Eucharistic offering in painted representations of the Melismos.⁸⁵ The inclusion of the small veil covering Christ, then, makes this a scene of liturgical significance.⁸⁶ Belting's conclusion is reasonable, but other scholars have disagreed about the function of the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Slobodan Ćurčić has offered quite a different interpretation of the function of certain aër-epitaphioi.⁸⁷ Ćurčić focused on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and a similar piece, the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figures 8–9). Identifying these objects as epitaphioi, Ćurčić rejected “the conventional *ex-silentio* argument that epitaphioi must have been stashed away somewhere during the entire year, to be brought out only for the Easter services.”⁸⁸ To explain where the epitaphioi were kept during the rest of the year, Ćurčić presented a theory that they were actually used as tomb covers.

The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios have very similar dedicatory inscriptions. On the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios we find a garbled, Greek inscription that Ćurčić has deciphered as “Remember, O Lord, the soul of thy servant Michael, the son of Kyprianos.”⁸⁹ The Old Church Slavonic inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin reads, “Remember, O God, the soul of your servant Milutin Uroš.”⁹⁰ According to Svetislav Mandić's interpretation, this formula was

⁸⁵ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 99.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine Loca Sancta?” 251–61.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 253.

⁸⁹ ΜΗΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΚΕ ΤΗΝ ΨΥΧΗΝ ΤΟΥ Δ[ΟΥ]ΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ[ΟΥ] ΤΟΥ ΚΥΠΡΙΑΝΟΥ. Slobodan Ćurčić, “Epitaphios,” in *Byzantium at Princeton: Byzantine Art and Archaeology at Princeton University*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and A. St. Clair (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 137.

⁹⁰ ПОМАНН БЄ ΔΙΣΤΑ ΡΑΒΔ СВОЄГО МΗΛΘΗΝΑ ΣΡΕΙΠΗ.

used to commemorate a person who was already dead.⁹¹ This theory obviously affects how we date such a textile, since the inscription would probably have been embroidered after the death of the person named.

Ćurčić expanded on Mandić's conclusion to argue that the Princeton Epitaphios and the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin are examples of a type of embroidered cloth that was made for a church containing the tomb of the person named in the inscription.⁹² Ćurčić further argued that they were meant as a kind of Late Byzantine *loca sancta* to be displayed in the church throughout the year, rather than only during Holy Week.⁹³ Both Ćurčić and Belting have argued, therefore, that the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin was not really, or not only, an epitaphios. While Ćurčić's argument is sound, there is no reason to doubt that the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios were actually intended to be used as aëres. On the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios, we again find a veil covering Christ like the one on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. The function of the textile itself was probably the same as the function of the textile represented within the image.

The inscriptions also do not disqualify these textiles from use as aëres. During the Great Entrance, the Cherubikon is interrupted in modern practice for commemorations chanted by the celebrants.⁹⁴ This practice is variable according to local custom.⁹⁵ The tradition dates back only as far as the twelfth century.⁹⁶ There is a general

⁹¹ Svetislav Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora* (Belgrade: Slovo Ljubve, 1975), 65–80.

⁹² Ćurčić, "Late Byzantine Loca Sancta?," 252–53.

⁹³ Ibid., 260–61.

⁹⁴ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 78.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 227, and note 35.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 78 and 228.

commemoration formula: “Πάντων ἡμῶν μνησθεῖν Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ (May the Lord God remember us all in his Kingdom).”⁹⁷ This is spoken aloud or prayed silently.⁹⁸ Specific commemorations called for in the sources were usually for persons of high rank, like the emperor and the patriarch.⁹⁹ By the fifteenth century the practice seems to have become more widespread and inclusive, but still variable according to local tradition.¹⁰⁰ The formula of the commemoration ultimately derives from Luke 23:42. We find that verse paraphrased in an embroidered inscription on the fifteenth-century Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia (catalogue number 18, figure 37):

+ΩΣ Ο ΛΗΣΤΗΣ ΟΜΟΛΟΓΩ ΣΟΙ / ΜΝΗΣΘΕΤΙ ΜΟΥ ΚΕ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ
ΣΟΥ / ΑΜΗΝ ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ’ ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΩ

(Like the robber I confess to you. Remember me, O Lord, in your kingdom.
Verily, I say to you today you will be with me in paradise.)

Also on the same textile is a specific commemoration of Antonios of Heracleia derived from the same formula:

ΜΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ / ΚΕ ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΤΟΥ / ΔΟΥΛΟΥ / ΣΟΥ.∴ // *ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥ
ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΑΣ

(Remember, O Lord, the soul of your servant Antonios of Heracleia).

The earliest example of this kind of commemorative inscription is found on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3):

+ΜΕΜΝΗΣΟ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ ΒΟΥΛΓΑΡΩΝ ΕΝ ΘΥΣΙΑΙΣ / ΑΝΑΚΤΟΣ
ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΥ:

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6 and 227.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 230.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 228.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Remember, Shepherd of the Bulgarians, during the sacrifice, the ruler Andronikos Palaiologos.

In this case, the inscription takes the form of a request for a commemoration, rather than being cast in form of the commemoration as it would be spoken or silently prayed during the Great Entrance.

With the aëres as evidence, we can conclude that such commemorations were associated with the Cherubikon and the Great Entrance as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that they had become part of the visual experience of the Great Entrance. The intercessory, commemorative inscriptions on these aëres associate the textiles with the Great Entrance, meaning that we can assume that they truly were aëres. As Hans Belting wrote, “This relationship speaks for itself.”¹⁰¹ The relationship is not less true of the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin or the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios, or other examples with inscriptions of the same intercessory formula, even if the persons commemorated in the inscriptions on those aëres were dead. Rather than being hidden away except during Holy Week, they were meant for use during any performance of the Great Entrance. Ćurčić is not necessarily incorrect in his hypothesis about the use of these textiles as tomb covers, but this hypothesis is not necessary to explain where they were on days other than Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The iconography on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios is, nevertheless, unusual. The Aër-Epitaphios of John Kantakouzenos (catalogue number 7, figure 19) is more typical of early aëres and epitaphioi. It was almost certainly intended for use as the type of object carried in procession in wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy. It presents the figure of Christ in semi-

¹⁰¹ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 127.

profile. Angels with rhipidia appear in each of the corners of the composition, and the figure of Christ is identified in an inscription as the King of Glory (βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης). Does the iconography actually identify a textile as an aër for the Great Entrance? The phrase “King of Glory” may indicate that it was intended for use specifically in the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, since the phrase occurs in the hymn sung during the Great Entrance on those occasions when the preconsecrated bread and wine are carried in procession.¹⁰² The function of this textile is probably not that specific. The resemblance of Aër-Epitaphios of John Kantakouzenos to images of the aër carried at the end of the procession in paintings of the Divine Liturgy suggests that it was meant to be used as an aër. I use the term “aër-epitaphios” for this example only because we cannot discount the possibility that this cloth was used as an epitaphios on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

The Aër-Epitaphios of John Kantakouzenos, like the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), is decorated with an image that refers to what the textile is meant to conceal when it is placed over the Eucharistic offering on the altar, so that the cloth reveals and conceals at the same time. The body of Christ is embroidered on the textile and the textile covers the body of Christ. The image also represents the rite itself and the significance of the rite as the burial of Christ. Although it is impossible to prove what the patron’s intentions were, I would also argue that the Aër-Epitaphios of John Kantakouzenos was also intended to assert or display the Orthodox Christian identity of John Kantakouzenos—or, more accurately, that the views of John Kantakouzenos are Orthodox. I will explain this idea further in Chapter 4. The image on

¹⁰² Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 38.

this example, regardless of the patron's intentions, presents a type of iconography that is strictly "liturgical" rather than "narrative."

"Narrative" elements begin to appear only later. The earliest extant aër or epitaphios that includes figures from the Threnos iconography, other than lamenting angels, is the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios of 1395/6 (catalogue number 15, figures 30–31). Here we find the Virgin and John the Theologian bending over the figure of Christ. Christ lies on the Stone of Unction, also sometimes called the Red Stone of Ephesus, rather than on the shroud.¹⁰³ The Stone of Unction was the stone used for embalming after the Crucifixion. The relic was brought, according to Niketas Choniates, from Ephesus to Constantinople by Emperor Manuel I Komnenos in the twelfth century.¹⁰⁴ It is a natural replacement for the shroud in the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, but artists were not always clear about what kind of object is under the body of Christ. Christ has been shown lying on the stone, the tomb, or the shroud, and it is not always clear which was intended. There are also examples that present Christ lying on some combination of shroud and tomb or shroud and stone, as on the 1545 Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery (figure 127), the Antimension of Bishop George Gennadius Bizancij (figure 85), or the Aër-Epitaphios of the Novgorod School (catalogue number 46, figure 77). On the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios, the body of Christ lies on what is almost certainly the Stone of Unction. It is not the stone that is the most interesting detail, however, but the added

¹⁰³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Warren Woodfin, "Liturgical Textiles," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 296; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, trans. Harry Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 125; Jan Louis van Dieten, ed. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, 2 vols., *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1975), volume 1, 222.

figures of the Virgin and John.

The iconography the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios is identified with the title O ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ ΘΡΕΙΝΟΣ (The Epitaphios Threnos). This is not the earliest extant example to bear the title, however, since we find the Old Church Slavonic translation of “Epitaphios Threnos” on the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (catalogue number 6, figures 17–18): НАДЪ ГРОБНОЮ ПЛАЧЕ (which translates as “Lamentation at the Grave”). Even before the figures of the Virgin and John were added to the embroidered image, or even when those figures were not included, the title was added to aër-epitaphioi. The question is, what caused the shift from a strictly liturgical iconography to the narrative iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos? The answer is probably simple. As the liturgy developed, the Great Entrance became a burial procession of Christ, as Robert Taft has shown.¹⁰⁵ The change in the iconography reflects a change in liturgical practice, so that the image begins to reflect the symbolism of the burial of Christ rather than, or usually in addition to, the symbolism associated with the image of Christ as Amnos. In most cases, a strictly narrative version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography did not completely replace the image of Christ as Amnos on aëres and epitaphioi. The images on most aëres and epitaphioi are combinations of both types of iconography.

We do not have wall paintings, like the paintings that show the Divine Liturgy, that indicate how the events of Holy Saturday looked. Instead we find the narrative scenes that illustrate the Passion. While the famous twelfth-century painting of the Epitaphios Threnos at St. Panteleimon at Nerezi (figure 113) represents an important

¹⁰⁵ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 216–19; Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence,” 89–90.

stage in the development of this iconography, it is clear in this and other examples that the scene derived from illustrations of the Entombment. Later examples, such as the wall painting at the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now Saint Kliment) at Ohrid developed the iconography of the Threnos into something entirely separate from the Entombment (figure 103). Kurt Weitzmann proposed that these types of iconography were understood as referring to essentially the same event, so that we will not find them depicted side by side.¹⁰⁶ That is not actually true in the post-Byzantine period. In the main church of the Dochiariou monastery on Mount Athos we find three scenes side by side—Deposition, Lamentation, and Entombment (figures 128–129)—each identified with its respective title. We also find the Lamentation and Entombment side by side at the fourteenth-century Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia (figures 130–131). While Weitzmann was not actually correct to say that the Lamentation and Entombment were never found together in the same program, he was right to recognize that the images were part of the same narrative scheme and referred to essentially the same idea.

While the iconography on embroidered aëres and epitaphioi is usually identified with an embroidered title, in Greek or Church Slavonic, as the Lamentation (as on the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis, catalogue number 9, figure 22), the same type of iconography has also been identified as the Entombment (as on the Aër-Epitaphios at the Stavronikita Monastery, catalogue number 10, figure 23) and even the Deposition (as on Patmos 2, catalogue number 39, figure 64). All three examples just mentioned would be more accurately described as presenting the iconography of Christ as Amnos, but that is typical of the tension between the “liturgical” iconography and

¹⁰⁶ Weitzmann, “The Origin of the Threnos,” 476.

“narrative” iconography on liturgical textiles. The titles used to identify these images—Lamentation, Deposition, and Entombment—refer to separate stages of the same narrative. In other words, the images mean the same thing, even if the titles are different. A Wallachian embroidery of the late seventeenth, the Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino, century presents both the Deposition and the Threnos as two panels within the same epitaphios (figure 132), which has the effect of emphasizing the narrative aspect of the composition. It also connects this textile with the events of both Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

By the late fifteenth century, the narrative scene of the Epitaphios Threnos had largely taken the place of the liturgical image of Christ as Amnos on aëres and epitaphioi. If we assume that most of the textiles bearing the Epitaphios Threnos iconography were epitaphioi for use during Holy Week, whether or not they were also used as aëres, then they also reflect how the faithful responded to and participated in the liturgy. The rites of Good Friday and Holy Saturday differed from the Divine Liturgy by the fourteenth century in that the liturgy had become more dramatic, a reenactment of the events of the Passion. As Robert Taft has pointed out, the liturgy of Holy Week had a “retro-influence” on the Great Entrance as well, so that both the Great Entrance and the liturgy of Holy Saturday had acquired symbolism as the burial procession of Christ.¹⁰⁷ The Epitaphios Threnos is an illustration of that narrative rather than a symbol of a theological abstraction like the Melismos. The Great Entrance had developed into a symbolic burial procession of Christ, which accounts for why figures from the Epitaphios Threnos

¹⁰⁷ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 246; Taft, “In the Bridegroom’s Absence,” 89–91.

iconography were added to aëres.¹⁰⁸ Can we deduce a distinction between aëres and epitaphioi from the evidence of iconography?

It is logical that images on epitaphioi would illustrate the drama of the Passion, which the congregation helped to reenact on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. This especially concerns the Holy Saturday Orthros, the morning service, which actually takes place on the night of Good Friday in modern practice. During that service the epitaphios is taken out of the church, usually on the portable bier, and it is carried around the building in a procession that includes the whole congregation. The participants carry candles and follow the textile as they reenact the burial of Christ. The epitaphios takes on the role of the body of Christ wrapped in the shroud. A sixteenth-century embroidered textile at the Indiana University Art Museum in Bloomington (figure 96) might actually be one of the earliest examples of the epitaphios in the modern sense, because it is embroidered with a version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography that lacks any components of the “liturgical” Christ Amnos iconography, such as the deacon angels or the ciborium (a canopy on pillars over the figure of Christ) found on many other examples. The puzzle of when the epitaphios of Holy Week became a distinct type of textile from the aër used in the Great Entrance remains unsolved, but the Bloomington Epitaphios offers at least one important clue.

The textile is dated 1534/35, and the inscription around the border is a Church Slavonic version of *Σιγησάτω πᾶσα σὰρξ βροτεία* (“Let all mortal flesh be silent”). This hymn replaces the Cherubikon on Holy Saturday, but it did not become the standard

¹⁰⁸ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 217.

hymn for Holy Saturday until after the middle of the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁹ It is possible, as some scholars have assumed, that such inscriptions identify a textile as an aër or an epitaphios, since the choice of hymn embroidered on the textile associates it with either the Great Entrance or Holy Week.¹¹⁰ I want to suggest, however, that we cannot easily identify a very early example as one or the other, as either an aër or an epitaphios, even if it is embroidered with a hymn associated with Holy Week. The question I want to address is whether we can use epitaphios at Indiana University as evidence in determining when the epitaphios became a distinct type of textile from the aër? In Chapter 3, I will address the question of where the Bloomington Epitaphios might have been made.

The Bloomington Epitaphios, as I will refer to it, is an excellent test case for this question. I have been able to study many aëres, epitaphioi, antimensia, and kalymmata quite closely, and the Bloomington epitaphios is among the most interesting. It has never been published, so I cannot rely upon the opinions of other scholars to draw any conclusions about it. It is in excellent condition, although it has undergone some conservation. It is unusual in its iconography, but its technique of embroidery is consistent with others of its period. It is not obviously of a particular group, however. It does not at first glance reveal itself to be obviously Russian, Greek, or Romanian, for example. Characteristics of aëres and epitaphioi associated with particular regions will be discussed in Chapter 3. The Bloomington Epitaphios also does not give the name of a patron or dedicatee in its inscription, as we find on many other examples. It does have a date in its inscription, and that date places this textile in precisely the period when we expect to find a differentiation between aëres and epitaphioi. This example, therefore,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 76–77.

¹¹⁰ Gonosová, “Epitaphios,” 720.

presents an opportunity to test the theory that a textile embroidered with the hymn *Σιγησάτω πάσα σὰρξ βροτεία* is necessarily an epitaphios.

The Bloomington Epitaphios is richly embroidered but quite small for an epitaphios of any period. Approximately 70 x 55 cm in its current state, it had been mounted on another cloth (figure 97), which was removed when it came into the collections of the Indiana University Art Museum. The image in the central panel is a variant of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. The figures are Christ lying on a shroud, the Virgin, John the Theologian, the *myrrophoroi*, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nikodemus. Mountains rise behind the figures, on either side. The iconography is identified with an inscription near the top of the composition: ΓΡΟΒΝΟΕ ΡΗΔΔΝΙΗΕ (Lamentation at the Tomb). Above the titulus is the abbreviation for “King of Glory” (ΙΡ CB). On the titulus, in very fine embroidery barely legible without a magnifying glass, is the abbreviation for “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews” (ΙΝΙQH). Below the titulus is the abbreviation for “Jesus Christ” (IC XC). On the crossbeam are four nails. Below the crossbeam is the Greek word NHKA. The figure of Christ is identified by another abbreviation (IC XC) embroidered between the figures of the Virgin and John.

The Bloomington Epitaphios belongs to a small group of textiles from the sixteenth century and earlier that include the hymn *Σιγησάτω πάσα σὰρξ βροτεία* (“Let All Mortal Flesh Be Silent”). Questions linger about the origin of this hymn, and about when exactly this hymn became associated with Holy Saturday.¹¹¹ As late as 1545, in the *Typikon of St. Sabas* printed at Venice, this hymn was still indicated as an optional

¹¹¹ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 41; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 76–77.

replacement for the Ordinary Cherubikon.¹¹² Each embroidered example of this hymn is attached to a version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography rather than the figure of Christ as Amnos accompanied only by deacon-angels. In the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, Demetrios Pallas listed four epitaphioi bearing the text of the hymn *Σιγησάτω πάσα σὰρξ βροτεία*, including the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios.¹¹³ The earliest textile that includes the Holy Saturday Cherubikon is the late fourteenth-century Aër-Epitaphios from the Cozia Monastery in Wallachia (catalogue number 15, figure 30). The others that Pallas listed are a fifteenth-century epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58), a sixteenth-century epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity at Zagorsk (figure 133), and a seventeenth-century epitaphios from Peta near Arta (figure 134). Although Pallas was unaware of it, the Bloomington Epitaphios also fits this category. To these we can add the fifteenth-century Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, now at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35, figure 59).

Church Slavonic translations of biblical and liturgical texts tend to be word for word renderings of the originals.¹¹⁴ Although there are variations in the wording of the hymn among the inscriptions embroidered in Church Slavonic, those variations still present literal translations from the Greek. On the Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96), the hymn is truncated, possibly because of the limited space on this relatively small textile. The date is also embroidered at the end of the inscription:

¹¹² It is indicated as optional with the phrase “εἰ θέλεις.” Bertonière, *Easter Vigil*, 158; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 77.

¹¹³ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 800.

¹¹⁴ Engström, *Cheruvimskie Pesnopenija v Russkoj Liturgičeskoj Tradicii*, 164; Boris Gasparov, *Old Church Slavonic*, vol. 338, *Languages of the World/Materials* (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2001), 6–7.

+ДА СМЛѢУНТЬ · ВСѢКА ПЛѢТЬ ЗЕМЛѢНА · Н ДА СТОНТЬ · СЪ СТРАХОМЪ / Н
 ТРЕПЕТОМЪ · Н НУТО ЖЕ ВЪ СЕБЕ ЗЕМЛѢН Н / ДА ПОМНЦАѢТ[Ь Н] СЕБО [ЦРЬ]Ъ
 ЦРСТВОУЕЦНМ[Ъ] ХС БѢ НАШЬ ПРHXOДНТ / ЗАК[ЛАТНСА] БНТН · Н ДАТНСЕ НАНЦІЖ
 ВѢРАНМ ∴ В ЛѢТ 7043.¹¹⁵

Let all mortal flesh be silent and stand in fear and trembling and consider nothing
 of this earth for the king of kings himself Christ our God comes to be slaughtered
 and given as food to the faithful ∴ in the year 7043 (1534/5).

The hymn refers to ideas expressed visually in images of the Melismos, while the image
 embroidered on the Bloomington Epitaphios presents a single moment from the drama
 reenacted on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. The image on the Bloomington Epitaphios
 is an illustration of a story, rather than a mystagogic image like the melismos or Christ as
 Amnos, but the inscription reminds us of the function of the aër.

The iconography on the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios is unique, but it is a combination of
 the Epitaphios Threnos iconography and the image of Christ as Amnos. While the
 embroiderers added the Virgin and John to the deacon-angels, no other human figures
 were added to the image on the Cozia Epitaphios. Just above the heads of the deacon-
 angels is the title of the scene: Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ ΘΡΕΙΝΟΣ (The Epitaphios Threnos). The
 image on the Cozia Epitaphios is the earliest datable example to include the Virgin and
 John.¹¹⁶ The inscription around the border of the Cozia Epitaphios is also slightly
 abbreviated version of the hymn, but less so than in the inscription on the Bloomington
 Epitaphios. Also in Old Church Slavonic, the version of *Σιγησάτω πάσα σὰρξ βροτεία* on
 the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios is followed by the date:

+ДА СМЛѢУНТЬ ВСѢКА ПЛѢТЬ ЗЕМНАГА Н ДА СТОНТЬ СТРАХОМ Н ТРЕПЕТОМ СЕ БО
 ЦРЬ ЦАРСТВѸЖ/ЦНМЪ Н ГОСПОДЬ ГОСПОДСТВѸЖЦНМЪ ХС БѢ НАШЬ ПРHXOДНТ
 ЗАКЛАТНСА Н ДАНЪ БЫТН ВЪ / ПНЦІЖ ВѢРНЫМЪ ПРѢДАВАРѢЖТ ЕГО ЛНЦН

¹¹⁵ I have not expanded abbreviations in this transcription, but I have filled in
 lacunae where the embroidery is damaged and letters are missing.

¹¹⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 26.

АНГЕЛЪСТН СЪ ВЪСѢМН НАУДАЛЫ Н ВЛАСТН МНОГООУНТАА ХЕР8/ВНМН Н ЗКРНЛАТА
СЕРАФНМН ЛНЦА НАКРЪВААЦА Н ВЪПНАЦА ПѢСНЬ СТ СТ СТ * В ЛѢТ ,SΨΔ

Let all mortal flesh be silent and stand in fear and trembling, for the King of kings and Lord of lords Christ our God comes to be slaughtered and given as food to the faithful. Before Him go the choirs of angels with all the principalities and powers, the cherubim with many eyes, and the six-winged seraphim covering their faces and crying the hymn Holy Holy Holy. In the year 6904.

This inscription omits from the hymn the phrase “thinking nothing of this earth,” which usually follows the phrase “and stand in fear and trembling.” As I have explained in the catalogue entry for this textile, the date is disputed because of different interpretations of the final character of the inscription.¹¹⁷ Having seen the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios up close, I agree with Pauline Johnstone that the date is 6904 (1396) rather than 6930 (1422).¹¹⁸ Whether it was made in 1396 or in 1422, this is the earliest extant aër or epitaphios embroidered with the Holy Saturday Cherubikon.

The Cozia Epitaphios might be the first example that we can confidently describe as having been intended for use as an epitaphios rather than an aër, if we take the hymn and the addition of the Virgin and John as evidence. It is worth noting that some examples listed in the catalogue include inscriptions that refer both to Holy Week and to the Great Entrance. Do the combinations of hymns and iconography suggest that some veils could be used either as aëres or as epitaphioi? A fifteenth-century textile from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity at Zagorsk demonstrates the problem (catalogue number 22, figure 43). It is embroidered with two hymns. Around the border is the

¹¹⁷ Iorga and Balș, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien*, 36; Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 264; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 104; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 171.

¹¹⁸ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 122.

Ordinary Cherubikon of the Great Entrance.¹¹⁹ Next to the legs of John the Theologian is the hymn that replaces the Cherubikon on Holy Thursday.¹²⁰ Do these hymns necessarily connect the textile itself with a particular liturgical function, or were they intended as commentaries on the embroidered image? Perhaps the image illustrates the hymns, and the hymns explain the image.

There are other textiles that combine hymns or excerpts from the liturgy in ways that suggest a flexible function. Several examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries include the Good Friday troparion “Noble Joseph.” This would seem to be good evidence that such textiles were intended for use during Holy Week, as Anna Gonosová has proposed.¹²¹ During the fourteenth century, however, this troparion also became associated with the deposition of the gifts on the altar at the end of the Great Entrance.¹²² One textile at the State Historical Museum in Moscow was made in 1440/41 for Archbishop Euphemios of Novgorod (catalogue number 30, figure 54) and its embroidered inscription begins with the troparion “Noble Joseph.” Lengthy, cramped, and heavily abbreviated, this border inscription also includes a dedication and another troparion recited after “Noble Joseph.”¹²³ The second troparion, “*V grobe plotski*” (“In

¹¹⁹ “We who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of all invisibly escorted by the angelic choirs. Allelouia.”

¹²⁰ “At your mystical supper receive me today, O Son of God, as a communicant, for I will not speak of the mystery of your enemies. I will not kiss you as Judas did, but as the thief I will confess you, ‘Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom.’”

¹²¹ Gonosová, “Epitaphios,” 720.

¹²² Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 246.

¹²³ “The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices, taking upon himself its burial, laid it in a new grave, but you rose after three days granting the world the Great Mercy. In the year 6949 (1440/1441) the Archbishop of Great Novgorod Euphemios

the Grave with the Body”), is from the Hours of Easter Sunday.¹²⁴ Beginning only in the sixteenth century is it attested in manuscript sources as a troparion for the deposition after the Great Entrance.¹²⁵ Both troparia were relevant to the symbolism of the Great Entrance as the burial cortege of Christ. Perhaps, then, these troparia are included on the Aër-Epitaphios of Archbishop Euphemios because of the connection to Holy Week. On the other hand, this textile may be evidence that both troparia were associated with the deposition of the gifts by the mid-fifteenth century. The appearance of both troparia on this veil supports the second possibility, but the function of such a textile was not necessarily as specific as later practice would suggest.

We ought also to consider whether the combination of inscriptions and iconography will affect our understanding of aëres and epitaphioi. While the iconography of the Bloomington Epitaphios is unusual, a textile of the late fifteenth century presents a similarly “narrative” image. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Novgorod School (catalogue number 46, figure 77) now in the State Historical Museum, Moscow, is embroidered with a colorful version of the Epitaphios Threnos with mountains in the background and a cross above the central group of figures. If it ever had an embroidered inscription, the inscription has been removed. Even this example has two angels on either side of the central composition, however, whereas the image on the Bloomington Epitaphios

commanded this aër to be made. Amen. +In the Grave with the body, but in Hades with the soul, as God; in Paradise with the Thief, and on the Throne with the Father and the Spirit, O Christ, uncircumscribed, filling all things.”

¹²⁴ Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991), 207, note 8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

includes no deacon-angels and no ciborium. The Bloomington Epitaphios does not even include the evangelist symbols or portraits, which often fill the corners of epitaphioi.

All these elements were used in some examples, such as the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum now at the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35, figure 59). In that example we find that the figures of Joseph and Nikodemus have been added to the figures of the Virgin and John the Theologian, which emphasizes the narrative aspect of the image without removing the liturgical elements. This example also includes the Trisagion embroidered near the bottom of the center panel. The Trisagion is another hymn associated with the Divine Liturgy, in which it immediately precedes the Great Entrance.¹²⁶ It is also sung on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.¹²⁷ In this case, then, the combination of iconography and inscriptions cannot help us determine whether the textile was intended for use as an aër as an epitaphios. On the Bloomington Epitaphios the combination of the Holy Saturday Cherubikon with a purely “narrative” version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography makes a stronger case for identifying this textile with Holy Saturday.

Can we, then, use the Bloomington Epitaphios or any other example as evidence in trying to determine when the epitaphios became a distinct type of liturgical textile from the aër? I believe the answer is “no.” The problem with drawing conclusions from the evidence of liturgical textiles is that each example is a unique response to the needs of a particular place, time, and patron. The liturgy changed during the fourteenth century, and ever since then the patrons and embroiderers of liturgical textiles have continued to

¹²⁶ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 25–27; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 225–26.

¹²⁷ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 226–27.

respond to the liturgy with creative adaptations of the standard iconography. At best we can conclude only that the Bloomington Epitaphios is the earliest datable textile to combine the Holy Saturday Cherubikon with a full, narrative version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. We can also speculate, because of the combination of iconography with the hymn *Σιγησάτω πάσα σὰρξ βροτεία*, that the Bloomington Epitaphios was meant to be used as an epitaphios. Whether other examples were meant to be used as aëres for the Great Entrance, or as epitaphioi during Holy Week, or both, is a question one cloth cannot answer.

By the end of the fifteenth century, images on embroidered aëres and epitaphioi rarely presented a purely liturgical version of the Christ Amnos iconography. The iconography was flexible, unusually so for Byzantine art of any period. Derived from wall paintings, the Epitaphios Threnos iconography is usually not as purely narrative as we find it on the fifteenth-century Novgorod Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 46, figure 77), the sixteenth-century Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96), or the seventeenth-century Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino (figure 132). There are very different variations embroidered on most aëres and epitaphioi of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and even the sixteenth century, the result of the gradual inclusion of figures from the narrative of the Passion scenes into the image of Christ as Amnos. Beginning in the fourteenth century, examples may also show, in addition to the Virgin, the myrrophoroi, Mary Magdalene, John the Theologian, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nikodemus. Each of these characters in the story is added to what usually remained essentially an image of Christ as Amnos. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80) is a good example of how the iconography

on aëres and epitaphioi combined the Epitaphios Threnos with Christ as Amnos. The figure of Christ was now surrounded with figures derived from wall paintings of the Epitaphios Threnos.

The result of the development of the iconography on epitaphioi was that the iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos, while still reminding the congregation that the body of Christ is actually present, is visually more dramatic and less symbolic than the iconography of the Melismos or Christ as Amnos. It is true that the images on aër-epitaphioi refer the narrative of the Threnos, but they also continued to refer to the ceremonies in which the textiles were used and even added a specific reference to funerary rites. When the Epitaphios Threnos iconography began to appear on aër-epitaphioi, as Christopher Walter has pointed out, elements of the ritual were introduced so that the angels not only carry rhipidia but some of them also carry censers, and censers “give a ritual character to the burial.”¹²⁸ We see angels with both rhipidia and censers on the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 48, figure 79).

While the change in iconography reflects the change in the liturgy toward the symbolism of the burial of Christ, does the change in the Holy Week liturgy represent the influence of, or even a concession to, popular piety? Does the more theatrical, interactive, rite of Holy Saturday, with its “retro-influence” on the Great Entrance reveal a relatively late instance of the influence of folk traditions on the liturgy, or is the Epitaphios Threnos service of Holy Week a survival of an ancient Greek tradition? The folk tradition of the

¹²⁸ Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church*, ed. A. A. M. Bryer and Robin Cormack, Birmingham Byzantine Series (London: Variorum, 1982), 44, 61, 139.

funeral lament has been well studied, most famously by Margaret Alexiou.¹²⁹ She described the tradition of decorating the epitaphios and singing the funeral lament, performed by women of the community, as deriving from ancient Greek tradition.¹³⁰ A likeness of the same ritual lament appears embroidered on the very textile, the epitaphios, that the women of a congregation decorated, and over which they kept vigil.¹³¹

I must also mention the drama *Christos Paschon*, traditionally attributed to the fourth-century bishop Gregory of Nazianzos.¹³² The text was assembled from bits and pieces borrowed from ancient writers, primarily Euripides, but it presents the very same narrative as that acted out on Good Friday and Holy Saturday: the Lamentation and Entombment. Exactly when the *Christos Paschon* was composed, or compiled, is still controversial. Some scholars have suggested a date as early as the fourth century, but most scholars prefer a date in the twelfth century.¹³³ Regardless of the date of the drama, it at least demonstrates that the Lamentation was understood as a dramatic subject. Margaret Alexiou has pointed out that the *Christos Paschon* touches on themes that also occur in popular ballads on Virgin's lament.¹³⁴ I do not mean to pursue the question of whether there was a Byzantine theater tradition, as Vénétia Cottas did, taking the *Christos Paschon* as evidence.¹³⁵ Several scholars have considered the question of

¹²⁹ See especially Chapter 4. Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Revised by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 55–82.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 70–78.

¹³¹ Ibid., 70.

¹³² André Tuilier, *Grégoire de Nazianze: La Passion du Christ*, vol. 149, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969).

¹³³ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁴ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 65.

¹³⁵ Vénétia Cottas, *Le Théâtre à Byzance* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1931), 197–249.

whether there was an Orthodox Christian tradition of liturgical drama, religious plays performed inside churches.¹³⁶ What I would like to suggest, however, is that the liturgy itself had developed a theatricality of its own. It is not unreasonable to describe the Epitaphios Threnos service of Good Friday and Holy Saturday as dramatic, or even theatrical, but this should be understood as descriptive rather than as evidence for the direct influence of the drama on either the service itself or the iconography associated with that service.

Vénétia Cottas also explored the connection between the *Christos Paschon* and the iconography and function of the epitaphios.¹³⁷ It is unnecessary and possibly misleading to argue for a direct connection between the *Christos Paschon* and the iconography on epitaphioi. Both the *Christos Paschon* and the Epitaphios Threnos iconography refer to multiple sources, ancient and medieval, including folk traditions of the funeral lament and specific textual sources such as the apocryphal Gospel of Nikodemus, the sixth-century kontakion *Mary at the Cross* by Romanos Melodos, and Symeon Metaphrastes' *Planctus Mariae*, a tenth-century prose treatment of the subject.¹³⁸ The services of Good Friday and Holy Saturday were a kind of theater, but only insofar as the liturgy of Holy Week had become a performance of a narrative with audience participation. In modern practice, on the night of Good Friday—when Holy Saturday Orthros is actually celebrated—young girls sometimes act out the part of the

¹³⁶ See, for example, Miloš M. Velimirović, "Liturgical Drama in Byzantium and Russia," *DOP* 16 (1962): 349–85.

¹³⁷ Vénétia Cottas, *L'Influence du drame "Christos Paschon" sur l'art chrétien d'Orient* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1931), 95–102.

¹³⁸ Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 62–78; Paul Maas and C. A. Trypanis, eds., *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 142–49.

myrrophoroi, and the whole congregation follows the epitaphios out of the church. The procession circles the church and returns with the epitaphios to the naos where the epitaphios takes the role of Christ in the tomb.

Liturgical textiles were affected by the changes in the liturgy. The body of Christ had always participated in the liturgy. In the form of the consecrated bread, Christ was regarded as actually present. The images on the veils that covered the Eucharistic offerings were intended to make this clear to the faithful. There was a point at which the epitaphios became a separate type of veil from the aër, but the iconography is not necessarily our best guide to discovering when that change took place. The iconography was flexible during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries precisely because the functions of these embroidered textiles were also flexible. In practice, the same image can mean very different things depending on the liturgical context. On the aër, the image initially only explained what it was that the veil covered. Only later did the image change to refer to the new symbolism of the Great Entrance as the burial procession of Christ. Used on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, however, the veil itself came to represent Christ. The embroidered epitaphios takes part in the services of Good Friday and Holy Saturday as though it is an actor taking the role of the body of Christ. The embroidered image, therefore, is a likeness of what the epitaphios represents during Holy Week. The image, the Epitaphios Threnos, also illustrates the events that are reenacted in the services of Good Friday and Holy Saturday when the whole congregation has a role to play.

Chapter 3: Geographical Distribution

In this chapter, I will discuss geographical tendencies in style and iconography of aëres and epitaphioi, and I will briefly discuss theories about workshops. In the first part of this chapter, I will explain the tables that I have created for Appendix B. These tables, and the categories of iconography I devised for them, reveal a general chronological development in the iconography embroidered on aër-epitaphioi from strictly “liturgical” toward a more “narrative” approach regardless of geography. In the second part of this chapter, I will introduce some of the technical terms used to describe the medium of embroidery. In the last part of this chapter, I will consider the question of whether a close analysis of embroidery techniques might help us to confirm conclusions that we have drawn from the evidence of style and iconography in making attributions.

1. Iconography and Style

The iconography on aëres and epitaphioi continued to develop after 1506. This is not to suggest that there was a teleological progress toward a single type that would be recognizable, in modern examples, as fully developed. Embroiderers continued to create new variations on the types of iconography discussed in Chapter 2, and they continued to respond to the innovations of others. Among surviving examples made after 1506 (the date of the most recent example listed in the catalogue in Part II), two general tendencies can be observed in the decoration of post-Byzantine aëres and especially epitaphioi. One tendency is toward greater complexity, filling the space of the composition with many small details, with crowds of figures, landscape, angels, decorative motifs, and so on. Even in the fifteenth century this tendency had affected some aër-epitaphioi. The fifteenth-century Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum (catalogue number 35, figure

59) is a crowded composition that includes several figures of the Epitaphios Threnos and the ciborium that had become a standard feature of this iconography in Russia. The 1545 Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery, Moldavia, is also crowded, but the iconography shows a cross, rather than a ciborium, over the figure of Christ (figure 127). Which elements the designer of the epitaphios might include can sometimes be attributed to local tradition, but we cannot discount the power of a particularly creative embroiderer's imagination to have far-reaching consequences.

One of the most famous and influential post-Byzantine embroiderers known by name is Despoineta. The name Despoineta is associated with several embroidered textiles of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Despoineta's influence seems to have been remarkably widespread and enduring. One of the most impressive of all seventeenth-century epitaphioi was embroidered by Despoineta (Benaki Museum number 33604). It is a large epitaphios, 150 x 112 cm, dated 1682 (figure 135). This epitaphios is an important enough part of the collection of the Benaki Museum to have been reproduced on posters and postcards, and copies of the motif of the moon in Despoineta's epitaphios have even been embroidered on sachets of potpourri sold in the museum's gift shop. Among the most characteristic features of Despoineta's style are the poses of the angels, with their hands either held out in a gesture of lamentation or crossed over their chests. Despoineta's handling of the large ciborium in particular seems to have been influential. The ciborium appeared on aër-epitaphioi much earlier than the beginning of the seventeenth century, the period Pauline Johnstone cited for its first appearance.¹ The

¹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 126.

idea of including the ciborium was an old one that can be traced back to the early fifteenth century or even the late fourteenth century.

Regardless of how the ciborium came to be a standard feature of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography on epitaphioi, it was the manner in which Despoineta filled the compositional space on epitaphioi attributed to her that appears to have had the most powerful effect on subsequent embroidery. A nineteenth-century epitaphios worked by Kokona tou Rologa (figure 136) exhibits a similar treatment of the large ciborium that dominates the center of the composition. Kokona tou Rologa also included a cross under the dome of the ciborium. The angels on either side of the composition, with their arms crossed over their chests, are similar to Despoineta's. Regardless of whether Despoineta's embroideries were the direct influence, the approach of filling the compositional space with multiple figures and motifs can be observed in many post-Byzantine epitaphioi. The Canterbury Epitaphios (figures 137–138) lacks the ciborium, but it includes a detailed landscape with Jerusalem and the crosses on Golgotha in the background. Unfortunately, the Canterbury Epitaphios is undated, but details of the iconography suggest that it belongs to the period after Despoineta, because of the arms folded across the chests of the angels, and possibly after the eighteenth century, because of the landscape. Such attributions are tricky, however, since so few textiles survive. Similarities in iconography may point only to common sources rather than to direct influence.

A famous eighteenth-century embroiderer, Christopher Žefarović, also included the crosses on Golgotha and a cityscape of Jerusalem as well as a large cross above the central grouping of figures on an epitaphios of 1752 now in the National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest (figure 139). Each of these examples also responds to the taste of

the time in which it was made. Christopher Žefarović, for example, combined “classical elements of the epitaphios with his feeling for the baroque,” as Pauline Johnstone observed.² The baroque feeling can be felt most strongly in Žefarović’s treatment of ornament, such as the embroidered frames around the evangelist portraits. The crowding, however, cannot be attributed exclusively to Žefarović’s “feeling for the baroque.” Embroiderers had been crowding the compositional spaces on epitaphioi for some time, as we can observe in an example such as the Moldavian Epitaphios of Petru Rareș of 1545 (figure 127).

The other tendency that we can observe in post-Byzantine aëres and epitaphioi is an archaizing simplicity. An epitaphios at the Benaki Museum is dated 1776 (Benaki Museum number 33726, figure 104) and features a variation of the iconography of Christ as Amnos very similar to the image on the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 48, figure 79). It includes the ciborium over the figure of Christ and representations of the sun and the moon. Otherwise, it presents a fairly simple version of the iconography of Christ as Amnos. It utterly lacks figures from the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography. The figure of Christ is presented within a rectangular shape that may be interpreted as a shroud or the Stone of Unction. Angels stand at either side of the composition. The figural style of the eighteenth-century Benaki epitaphios is quite abstract. There is no attempt at modeling with variations in value, but the embroidery technique is quite sophisticated. Several different stitching patterns were used so that the artist has created an interesting visual texture within a very limited palette of color. Again, regardless of the figural style or the handling of the embroidery technique, the

² Ibid., 127.

treatment of the iconography can be traced to the very origins of embroidered aëres and epitaphioi. This is also not an isolated instance of an archaizing revival of a simple image of Christ as Amnos. A similar treatment of the iconography, if not of technique or style, can be observed on a 1595 epitaphios in the treasury of the Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos (figure 140).³

Style, like the details of iconography, is a function of time, place, artist, and patron. It is, in other words, a matter of taste. The figural style of one embroidered epitaphios may be more naturalistic than another even while presenting a variation on the same iconography, as the epitaphioi of Despoineta (figure 135) and Kokona tou Rologa (figure 136) make clear. In addition to discussing style and iconography, albeit at the risk of confusing matters, we can also talk about styles of iconography. By “styles of iconography” I mean only that iconography can be adapted in its details while presenting the same general set of figures and motifs. While we can observe two general tendencies, simplicity and complexity, there are also distinct approaches to iconography on aëres and epitaphioi that can be associated with particular periods and places. There are sets of iconography, and I have made one attempt to categorize such sets in Appendix B. My general approach in devising a set of categories to describe the iconography on aëres and epitaphioi is in the same spirit as Gabriel Millet’s description of categories of iconography in his important study of Byzantine Embroidery.⁴

Within each of the eight types that I have devised for Appendix B, I have grouped examples that display similar approaches to how that iconography is treated, regardless of the figural style. I do not mean to propose that these types represent static categories that

³ Theocharis, “Embroidery,” 476–77.

⁴ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 86–109.

describe the state of the art at a particular time and place. I have used this approach as much to point out flaws in the reasoning behind such categories as to have a convenient way of discussing the development in iconography from simple images of Christ as Amnos to more complex images of the full Epitaphios Threnos iconography. Among the flaws in this approach is that it can lead us to assume that one textile must be later than another because the iconography is more complex. We have to be careful when we reason about when an undated example might have been made, or when we attempt to attribute the approach to iconography and style seen in one example to the influence of another example.

It is possible, for example, to argue that we find a pattern of influence among a related group of textiles. The Serbian Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) is very similar to several Moldavian examples, including the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios, from the Žółkiew Monastery (catalogue number 26, figure 47), and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți (catalogue number 29, figure 53). This lures us into a trap, however, since it is easy to accept what seems like an obvious conclusion even though it is derived from an argument that is not actually valid. If the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia was in Moldavia by the early fifteenth century, we might argue, then it must have had an influence on later Moldavian aër-epitaphioi that resemble it; and if examples like the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți (catalogue number 29, figure 53) or the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios (catalogue number 26, figure 47) reveal the influence of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia, then the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia must have arrived in Moldavia before the date

of the other earliest example. This argument utterly begs the question, and all we can really conclude about this group is that several similar aër-epitaphioi were produced in Moldavia in the fifteenth century, and that they are also similar to the Serbian Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia. Also, we can describe the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia as Serbian only because the patron was Serbian. We do not know where it was made or how it came to be in Moldavia.

The point of the categories I have used in the tables in Appendix B, then, is only that they are a convenient way to graph the tendency to introduce figures from the Epitaphios Threnos iconography into the traditional iconography of Christ as Amnos on aëres and epitaphioi. The eight types of iconography that I have devised for tables 1 and 3 in Appendix B are slightly different from those proposed by Gabriel Millet. I will first describe Millet's groups, and then I will explain the alternative types that I have devised. Millet's group 1 ("Puissances et Anges") consists of those examples that are essentially images of Christ as Amnos without figures of the narrative Threnos iconography.⁵ Group 1a includes those examples in which Christ is presented without a shroud or stone: the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (number 2 in my catalogue, figure 5), the Pantokrator Monastery Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21), and the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței (catalogue number 42, figure 66).⁶ One could argue that the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței does not really belong in this group. One reason for Millet's having included it in this group surely must be its similarity to the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios. The Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței is actually more like the examples in Millet's group 1d, but Millet argued for a much earlier date than I

⁵ Ibid., 87–102.

⁶ Ibid., 87–89.

have assigned to the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios. Millet's listing the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței among the others in his group 1a makes the earlier date seem more plausible.

Group 1b includes the basic Christ Amnos iconography with Christ on a shroud or stone and with deacon-angels standing over the figure of Christ.⁷ The examples that Millet listed for group 1b are the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11, figure 24), the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 12, figure 25), and the Aër-Epitaphios of Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes (catalogue number 21, figure 41). Millet's group 1c includes two examples that show Christ on the stone with deacon-angels and mourning angels in the zone above: the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10), and Chilandar 1 (catalogue number 6, figures 17–18).⁸ Millet's fourth subgroup, group 1d, includes two examples that show Christ without a shroud or stone.⁹ This arrangement appears to present Christ as floating in space, but it is probably meant to be read as though the figure is lying on the textile itself. In group 1d, Christ is accompanied by several deacon-angels and mourning angels. The examples that Millet presented in group 1d are the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia (number 17 in my catalogue, figure 36) and the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia (catalogue number 18, figure 37).

Millet's group 2 ("Puissances, Anges et Thrène") includes those embroidered aër-epitaphioi that exhibit some aspect of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography. There are fewer examples of this type listed in Millet's *Broderies Religieuses de Style*

⁷ Ibid., 89–94.

⁸ Ibid., 94–99.

⁹ Ibid., 99–102.

Byzantin than there are in his group 1. Four of the five listed for group 2 are Romanian and three of the Romanian examples are Moldavian.¹⁰ The only non-Romanian example among group 2 is Serbian. Group 2a is represented only by Chilandar 2 (number 19 in my catalogue, figure 38), which shows the Virgin and John the Theologian with the myrrophoroi and the cross.¹¹ Millet's group 2b includes only the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30), which shows the Virgin and John but not the myrrophoroi or the cross.¹² Group 2c includes the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figure 50), which shows Christ on a slab, deacon-angels, a mourning angel, the Virgin, and one of the myrrophoroi, but not John the Theologian.¹³ Group 2c also includes the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare (Oreste Tafrali's Putna 66—number 44 in my catalogue, figure 69).¹⁴ The Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare shows Christ on the Stone of Unction, deacon-angels, mourning angels, the Virgin, the myrrophoroi, John the Theologian, Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemus. It is only certain basic features that these two members of Millet's group 2c have in common: Christ on a slab, deacon-angels, mourning angels, and at least some figures of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos scene. They also both have the evangelist symbols in the corners.

Group 2d consists of only the Moldovița Epitaphios (catalogue number 45, figure 71), which includes the Virgin, John, mourning angels, deacon-angels, the evangelist symbols, and myrrophoroi, but shows Christ without a shroud or a slab.¹⁵ The ninth subgroup that Millet devised, group 2e, consists only of one example, the Epitaphios of

¹⁰ Ibid., 102–08.

¹¹ Ibid., 102.

¹² Ibid., 104–05.

¹³ Ibid., 105–07.

¹⁴ Ibid; Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 36.

¹⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 107.

Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, which is dated 1545 (figure 127), and therefore excluded from my catalogue because of its date.¹⁶ It shows Christ on a slab, the Stone of Unction, with all the characters from the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography plus the evangelist symbols, the deacon-angels and mourning angels, and the cross and other implements of the Passion.

The eight types that I have devised for tables 1 and 3 in Appendix B are similar to Gabriel Millet's groups because of my focus on the number of figures included, but I have taken into account a greater number of examples from a wider geographical area. My types 1 and 2 correspond to Millet's group 1a. I include in type 1 only those examples that show Christ in a frontal pose displayed as though the cloth of the epitaphios is the shroud of Christ. The Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8), which was probably unknown to Millet, is one of the two surviving examples of this type. The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (number 2 in my catalogue, figure 5) is the other example. In Table 1 of Appendix B, I also consider the Turin Shroud an example of type 1 iconography, although the Turin Shroud is not an epitaphios. I include the Turin Shroud only to make a point about the iconography of the three textiles that make up type 1. Type 2 is the variation on type 1 that shows Christ in a slight profile rather than a fully frontal pose. Type 2 also shows Christ without a shroud, or the Stone of Unction, or a tomb represented in the iconography. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos (catalogue number 7, figure 19) is an example of type 2. Type 3 is the Christ as Amnos iconography with only the figure of Christ on a shroud

¹⁶ Ibid., 107–08.

or slab plus a pair of standing deacon-angels holding rhipidia. The Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3) is the earliest extant example of type 3.

Type 4 is almost the same as type 3 but introduces the figures of the Virgin and John the Theologian standing behind the figure of Christ, as in the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30). Type 5 includes those examples that represent Christ on the shroud or slab with the Virgin seated or standing at Christ's head, whether John the Theologian is present or not. Examples of Type 5 are the Puchezhsk Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 30, figure 54) and the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figure 50). Type 6 adds the cross or a ciborium behind the figure of Christ, but without a landscape and regardless of the number of figures added to the Virgin and Christ. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44) is possibly the earliest extant example of this type. Type 7 shows at least one figure from the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography in addition to Christ, the Virgin, and John but without either a ciborium or a cross behind the figure of Christ. The Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare (Oreste Tafrali's Putna 66—number 44 in my catalogue, figure 69) is an example of type 7. The 1545 Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery (figure 127), which Millet listed as the only example of his group 2e, would also fit into type 7. Type 8 is the type that shows the full Epitaphios Threnos with the main characters of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography in a landscape with the cross at the center of the composition behind the figure of Christ. Type 8 is rare. A late fifteenth-century Novgorodian epitaphios, listed as number 46 in my catalogue (figure 77), might be the earliest example of type 8. It is the only example listed in my catalogue.

The immediate benefit of devising a set of categories or types such as I have described here is that we can use them to chart when and where these types were most popular. As Table 1 in Appendix B reveals, there actually was a chronological development toward iconography that more closely emulated the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography of wall paintings. As Table 2 suggests, there were also regional preferences for certain types of iconography. One type is more likely to have been used in a particular place than another type. The limitations of this system of types become immediately apparent when we confront the question of where to place an example like Chilandar 2 (catalogue number 19, figure 38). Chilandar 2 belongs among those *aër-epitaphioi* that bear iconography of type 4, but it also includes the *myrrophoroi* and the cross, which means that we could reasonably assign it also to type 6 even though it lacks Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemus. We could devise a set of types or categories of iconography sufficiently complex to take the Chilandar 2 into account, but such a complex set of types might be so complex that we would be able to assign only one example to each type. The *Aër-Epitaphios* of Georgios Arianites (catalogue number 13, figure 26) fits with type 3, but it would be possible to argue that it belongs to type 4 since the Virgin and John appear in roundels in the border. On the other hand, it is also a unique example of yet another type because it includes concelebrating bishops among the figures in the central panel.

The same kind of difficulty is presented by several of the examples listed in the catalogue, so it is necessary to emphasize that the purpose of describing the types I have used in Appendix B is twofold. First, this is meant only as an alternative version of the very thing that Gabriel Millet attempted, a list of categories that allows us to see how

each genus relates to the others over time. In Table 1 of Appendix B it becomes evident from the chronological distribution of types that the tendency was for embroidered aëres and epitaphioi to include more narrative elements of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography already established in wall paintings. Second, it is meant also to question the very idea that such categories are useful to understanding these textiles by calling attention to the fact that each example is actually a unique product of a particular time and place. This is not to suggest that it is wrong to draw conclusions about similarities of iconography and style, but we must be careful about how we draw those conclusions.

There is also the problem of catalogue numbers 14, 25, and 43. These three examples do not show the figure of the dead Christ, and so they do not fit anywhere in the set of types I have devised. All three are Russian: the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia (catalogue number 14, figure 29), the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal (catalogue number 25, figure 46), and the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan (catalogue number 43, figure 67). All three are aëres rather than epitaphioi, and all three of these aëres are Russian. That aëres from other regions always included the figure of the dead Christ suggests that choices about what iconography was appropriate for a textile of a particular function could vary from one place to another. On the other hand, the three Russian aëres that do not have an image of Christ as Amnos might be the only extant examples of a larger group of similar aëres.

That is speculation, however, and we have to deal with the evidence that we have. With only one aër that replaces the figure of Christ as Amnos with a representation of the Mandyion, for example, we are left to speculate about the meaning of this image to its patron. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Natalija Mayasova has suggested that this aër

(catalogue number 14, figure 29) might have been made to commemorate Dmitrii Donskoi's 1380 victory over the Mongols at Kulikovo.¹⁷ The Mandyliion continued to be an important image for military banners right up to World War I when it was still used by the Russian and Bulgarian armies (figure 124).¹⁸ If the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia had such a specific association for the patron, and possibly for any contemporary of the patron who encountered the aër, then the form and function of the object are specific to a particular time and place because of additional meanings layered upon the generic meaning of the aër as a liturgical textile. To what extent is it necessary, then, to treat every aër and epitaphios as completely unique?

This leads us to another point about iconography and style that becomes apparent in the catalogue in Part II. There are approaches to iconography and figural style that we can describe as representing regional tendencies. Certain groups of aëres and epitaphioi are, for example, distinctively Russian or Georgian. There is a distinctive Georgian approach to iconography, just as there is a distinctive Novgorodian figural style. There are also exceptions. Some aëres and epitaphioi can be linked with a particular place for reasons other than iconography or style, but they are quite different from other examples of that region. The earliest Georgian epitaphios dates to the middle of the fifteenth century. It is the only extant example of which I am aware that was made before the sixteenth century. Therefore it is the only Georgian example included in the catalogue in Part II. The Epitaphios of King George VIII (catalogue number 32, figure 56) is essentially an example of the iconography that I have called type 7. It includes other elements of iconography that I have not taken into account in the eight types used in

¹⁷ Mayasova, "Pamiatnik moskovskogo zolotnogo shit'ia XV veka," 491.

¹⁸ Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 215.

Appendix B, characteristics in the approach to the iconography that continued to turn up on later Georgian epitaphioi.

The Epitaphios of King George VIII presents Christ lying on an oddly shaped Stone of Unction. In the upper zone is a representation of the ascension with Christ on a throne within a mandorla held by two angels. Near the bottom are soldiers guarding the tomb. The tomb with the soldiers is represented by a richly embroidered square that looks like a carpet. The four soldiers are arranged around the tomb with the two at the left and right sides shown vertically, and the two at the top and bottom shown in a horizontal position with their heads pointing to the left side of the composition. Two women are shown approaching a second representation of the tomb where they are confronted by an angel pointing to them and standing on a trapezoidal shape that stands for the door to the tomb. These details of the iconography, but not the style in which they are presented, became common features on epitaphioi that are, as a result, instantly recognizable as Georgian.

The seventeenth-century Georgian Epitaphios of Queen Mariam (figure 141) presents many of the same quirks of iconography as the Epitaphios of King George VIII. Differences include the arrangement of the various elements within the composition, so that the women at the tomb appear to the left of the soldiers guarding the tomb. There are also only three soldiers arranged around the tomb. Otherwise, the similarity between these two Georgian epitaphioi is immediately apparent even though the figural styles in which the iconography has been rendered are quite different. The Epitaphios of Queen Mariam is not the only Georgian epitaphios to bear a strong resemblance to the Epitaphios of King George VIII. I do not mean to suggest that the Epitaphios of King

George VIII was the ur-epitaphios for Georgia, but the Epitaphios of King George VIII is the earliest extant example of the particular variation on the Epitaphios Threnos iconography that would become prevalent in—and peculiar to—Georgia.

The Epitaphios of King George VIII might be an original interpretation of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography by that embroiderer. On the other hand, it might have been copied from a manuscript illumination, icon, or wall painting that presented the iconography in this way. Although I am unaware of such a painting, this distinctively Georgian iconography did not necessarily first appear on the Epitaphios of King George VIII. There are also exceptions to this distinctive approach among Georgian epitaphioi. The sixteenth-century Epitaphios of Bagrat III (figure 142) is Georgian, as the language of the embroidered inscription reveals, but the iconography is decidedly unlike either the Epitaphios of King George VIII or the Epitaphios of Queen Mariam. Also, the figural style of each Georgian example I have mentioned is different from the other two.

In Georgian wall paintings of the Divine Liturgy the image of the aër carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession is just like the same object in wall paintings in other places. At the Gelati Monastery, for example, the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the base of the katholikon's dome shows the figure of Christ as Amnos on a textile (figure 143).¹⁹ This painting is attributed to a seventeenth-century artist named Tevdore.²⁰ The aër presented in this painting of the Divine Liturgy is very much like the one we find in the painting of the Divine Liturgy at Kaisariane in Athens (figure 105), which is

¹⁹ Evgenii Derlemenko and Eduard Gigilashvili, *Gelati: Architecture, Mosaic, Frescos* (Tbilisi: Xelovneda, 1982), figure 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

attributed to an eighteenth-century painter named George Markou.²¹ Is this evidence for a differentiation between the aër and the epitaphios by the seventeenth century? In other words, does the difference between extant Georgian epitaphioi and the object shown in the painting mean that these were two different kinds of liturgical textiles? Probably not, since the paintings in both Gelati and Kaisariane are only conventional representations in what amounts to an international iconography of the Divine Liturgy, regardless of what local aëres might actually have looked like and regardless of whether the aër was still actually carried this way by the eighteenth century.

It is both the figural style and the approach to iconography, as well as the handling of the composition, that connects the Novgorodian examples listed in the catalogue to one another. The iconography of the Novgorodian aëres and epitaphioi tends to present the figure of Christ with the Virgin, John, and several angels, as we see in the case of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery (catalogue number 31, figure 55). The deployment of that iconography leaves much of the compositional space open. The Novgorodian examples also tend to be much longer than they are wide, compared to aër-epitaphioi from anywhere else, so that there is a greater horizontal emphasis with a corresponding elongation of the figure of Christ. On the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30, figure 54), we find another example of this style. The dedication also provides the name of the patron, Archbishop Euphemios. Since Euphemios was the Archbishop of Novgorod, A. N. Svirin identified these examples, quite logically, with Novgorod.²² This is the same Archbishop Euphemios II of

²¹ Woodfin, "Liturgical Textiles," 298.

²² Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 29–40.

Novgorod (1429–58) mentioned in the dedicatory inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58).

The dedication inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia names Euphemios as the recipient of that aër-epitaphios, which was given to the Church of Saint Sophia by Grand Prince Basil II of Moscow.²³ Svirin grouped the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia with the Novgorod school, but this aër-epitaphios presents a very different approach to the composition, without the pronounced horizontal emphasis. It includes the same number of figures as we find on both the Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery and the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios, but the space of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia is filled with additional details, such as the ciborium over the figure of Christ and many decorative motifs in the space around the figures. The figure of Christ is also not as attenuated. Several other examples are similar to the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, including the Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I (catalogue number 20, figure 39) and the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk (catalogue number 22, figure 43). That the ciborium appears on examples like the Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I and on other examples of Muscovite patronage from that period could be construed as evidence that the Major Sakkos of Photios (figure 88–89) was of special importance in the development of Russian aëres and epitaphioi. On the Major Sakkos of Photios, the figure of Christ as Amnos is shown on the altar and under a ciborium (figure 88). The scene appears between the Crucifixion and the Anastasis. This would

²³ I use the transliteration “Basil” rather than “Vasilii” or “Vasily.” I have chosen to do this only because the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium refers to the father of Basil II as Basil I. This form of the name might be more familiar to students of Byzantine history. Alice-Mary Talbot, “Basil I,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 260–61.

necessarily mean that aër-epitaphioi with the ciborium were made later than the Major Sakkos of Photios (i.e. after 1417). This would explain why the ciborium begins to appear on aër-epitaphioi around that time, but this idea can remain only speculation.

Although Svirin included them both among his “Novgorod School,” the styles and the variations in the iconography on the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia are clearly quite different, and we actually have two distinct groups represented by these two examples.²⁴ One group, including the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios, may be associated with a hypothetical Novgorod workshop. The second group, including the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, can be associated with the patronage of at least two Grand Princes of Moscow in the fifteenth century, Basil I and Basil II. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia might have been made in Novgorod, the place for which it was intended, but the differences in style compared to other aër-epitaphioi associated with Novgorod suggest that it was the product of a different workshop than the one that produced the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios. Whether that other workshop was in Novgorod or Moscow is a separate question. In the case of the aër-epitaphioi that we can associate with Novgorod or Moscow, then, the question of how we categorize them has to do with whether we privilege style or patronage in associating a textile with a particular place.

The attenuation of the figure of Christ in some examples associated with Novgorod also raises such questions as whether that detail of style can be traced to another source and whether that style affected later examples of this iconography. A

²⁴ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 29–40.

seventeenth-century icon of the Epitaphios Threnos from Peć (figure 144) reveals the same tendency to elongate the figure of Christ as we find in the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30, figure 54). Is this the influence of the Russian style on the icon painter, as Svetozar Radojčić has suggested?²⁵ Or is this only a response to the composition as a horizontal space that includes only one horizontal figure? There is, of course, no reason why, in composition and style, the style of the Peć icon could not have been affected by both the influence of Russian art, art from other places, and the choices of that particular artist. The artist was certainly responding to other examples of the iconography, whether painted or embroidered.

A Cretan icon of the Epitaphios Threnos (figure 145) in the Ecclesiastical Museum, Thera, presents the iconography in much the same way. There are differences in details, such as the presence or absence of the city walls in the background or the lamenting angels hovering in the space above the central group of figures. The figure of Christ is not elongated in the same way as it is in the icon at Peć. There are also conspicuous similarities, such as the woman who raises her arms into the air in a gesture of lamentation. The shrouds in both images are shown as striped cloths. A sixteenth-century icon of the Epitaphios Threnos from the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, Wallachia (figure 146–147), also presents the iconography in much the same way. In this case, the figure of Christ is somewhat elongated, as it is on the icon at Peć, but the lamenting angels are absent from the space around the cross, as they are on the icon at Thera. The styles of the three paintings are noticeably different, but these are icons that present versions of the Threnos iconography that would have been recognizable to an Orthodox

²⁵ Kurt Weitzmann, Manolis Chatzidakis, and Svetozar Radojčić, *Icons* (New York: Alpine, [1980]), 160.

Christian, whether in Crete, Kosovo, or Wallachia. To what extent are similarities attributable to indirect influence or common sources? To what extent are differences attributable to the originality of the artist or the artist's response to a compositional space?

Wallachian and Moldavian aëres and epitaphioi present particular problems. If they did not bear inscriptions, in many cases it would be difficult to tell where they were made, not because they are like examples made somewhere else, but because they are unlike any other example. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 44, figure 69) presents yet another unique interpretation of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. Certain details link it to other examples. The arrangement of the angels, but not the figural style in which they were executed, seems to refer to the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36). This arrangement of angels within the composition is one of the most consistent features on Moldavian epitaphioi. We also find it on the 1545 Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery (figure 127). The decorative motif of the flower-like stars that fill the space around the figures on these aër-epitaphioi is also similar. In fact, the extent of the resemblance between any aër or epitaphios and the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia is one of the best clues in determining whether a textile might be Moldavian.

The pose of the woman with her hands raised in the air on the left side of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare is quite different from similar figures on earlier embroidered aër-epitaphioi, but this figure is strikingly similar to the same figure as presented on all three of the icons of the Epitaphios Threnos that I have mentioned (figures 144, 145, and 146). While some aër-epitaphioi from Russia may be readily

associated with Novgorod or Moscow, there is not a similarly consistent approach to the Epitaphios Threnos iconography among Moldavian examples, at least for the period before 1506. Just as the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia might have affected certain details in fifteenth-century Moldavian embroidery, embroidery made in Romania after the period of Ștefan cel Mare owe much to the artists who enjoyed his patronage. We can begin to see, however, that Moldavian embroiderers were not subject to slavishly copying another artist's treatment of the iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos any more than icon painters were. Each Moldavian aër-epitaphios is a unique composite of motifs, poses, and styles, whether borrowed or invented.

For Moldavian and Wallachian embroidery embroidered inscriptions are necessarily among our best sources of information for making attributions. Inscriptions on Romanian examples, whether Moldavian or Wallachian, were in Old Church Slavonic. The earliest example of the Romanian language in an inscription on an epitaphios, of which I am aware, is the eighteenth-century Epitaphios of John, son of Argir and husband of Helen (figure 148). The inscription around most of the border is in Church Slavonic. The Romanian portion of the inscription, the dedication in the border across the bottom, was also written in Cyrillic characters.²⁶ The Epitaphios of John also names the embroiderer, Roxanda, in the Romanian part of the inscription. The language of an inscription will not provide many clues about whether an embroidered textile is Wallachian or Moldavian, since Church Slavonic was the ecclesiastical language of Romania. There are slight differences in wording between Romanian inscriptions and

²⁶ The Cyrillic alphabet was used for writing Romanian until well into the nineteenth century. Charles King, "The Ambivalence of Authenticity, or How the Moldovan Language Was Made," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 120.

Russian inscriptions in Church Slavonic, however, telltale signs like the use of the Greek loanword “aër” instead of the Slavonic word “vozdukh.” Also, Moldavian dedication inscriptions tend to be rather formulaic.²⁷

For Russian and Romanian aëres and epitaphioi, we have enough examples to make generalizations about iconography, inscriptions, and style. There are simply too few Bulgarian examples from before 1500 to draw any conclusions about whether Bulgarian aëres and epitaphioi made during that period represent a distinct regional group. Even if we consider all the textiles listed in Part II, what can we really conclude from such a small sample when each textile is actually unique in some way? If we were to take the whole corpus of extant examples as evidence, as though this group of examples were all that ever existed, we could conclude that the epitaphios spread from Greece to Russia with changes in iconography and style developing along the way. This line of reasoning does nothing more than confirm what we already know must have been the case. There is also a corresponding influence back along the same route. For example, Despoineta’s designs, with their prominent ciboria, suggest an influence of Russian embroidery on Greek artists. One conclusion is inescapable. Many of the extant aëres and epitaphioi are associated with specific patrons: the Byzantine Emperors Andronikos II and John Kantakouzenos, the Grand Princes of Moscow Basil I and Basil II, the Georgian King George VIII, and especially the Moldavian Voivode Ștefan cel Mare. Perhaps the importance of the aër-epitaphios changed from one time and place to the next, or perhaps

²⁷ See, for example, the inscriptions on the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios (catalogue number 26, figure 47), the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 44, figure 69), and Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery (catalogue number 45, figure 71).

many of the examples that survive were important precisely because of their connections to important patrons.

Given the small number that have survived from the period 1295 through 1506, all we can really conclude about the distribution of style and iconography is that there were regional tendencies. We can also conclude that there were variations within those regions, some associated with particular patrons. There was even variation in iconography and style among examples attributable to a single patron. This attests to the creativity of artists working with a dogmatic iconography in a notoriously laborious medium. The variety is rewarding for the scholar who takes an interest in these objects, but it also presents a practical problem. It is very difficult to make attributions based on style. Some examples are readily recognizable as belonging to a particular time and place, but when we confront an orphaned textile, an example like the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 48, figure 79) that cannot be associated with a patron or a secure date, we are forced to use other evidence to assign it to a time and place.

The Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8) can be assigned to a particular time only because it is so much like the only other extant example with which it shares its unusual iconography, the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figure 5). We can date the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin to around 1321 because that is the year Stefan Uroš II Milutin died. We know the name of the dedicatee of the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios, but we cannot identify that name with a particular, known historical figure. The inscription is in Greek, however, so that helps us narrow down the location to the Greek-speaking world. We can conclude, then, that the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios was probably made in Greece in the early fourteenth century.

By “Greece,” in this case, as in the tables in Appendix B, I do not mean the modern nation. The term can only refer to that part of the world that was Greek-speaking at the time, or that now corresponds to a geographical area within the modern borders of Greece. With which nation we associate an object depends on several factors that continue to affect how we think about these objects.

The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronkos II was in Ohrid up to the first Balkan War. It was lost for much of the twentieth century until it turned up in the 1990s in Sofia, Bulgaria. Can we reasonably call this example Bulgarian because the inscription refers to the “Shepherd of the Bulgarians,” or should we call it Macedonian because it was in Ohrid for six hundred years? We could also argue that it is Greek, because the patron was Greek and the inscription is in Greek. Such questions mean that the tables in Appendix B include many uncertain geographical attributions. In the case of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II, the uncertainty has to do with how we think about the place for which it was made, even though we know exactly where Andronikos meant for it to be. We confront a different problem if we hope to learn more about textiles without helpful inscriptions or records of provenance, textiles like the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios. Can we reason our way from the evidence provided by the textiles themselves toward better attributions?

I have not been able to examine the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios, but the iconography, style and inscription still might not be able to help us learn where it was made. We would have to explore the possibility that a close analysis of the technique could help us learn more about that example. I will return to that point later in this chapter. First, we may return to the Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96), our test case

from Chapter 2, to consider what evidence is most helpful in attributing it to a particular place. We already know when it was made, because the date is included in the inscription. The question I want to consider now is whether we can deduce from the iconography and the inscription where the Bloomington Epitaphios might have been made. The records of its provenance take us back only to 1968, when the collector Burton Y. Berry sent it to Dumbarton Oaks.²⁸ It was subsequently sent to Bloomington in 1972. Judging by the little that Berry had to say about it, he did not really know what this textile was.²⁹ All that we can learn about the Bloomington Epitaphios must be deduced from the object itself, from its iconography, inscription, and any other piece of evidence it might offer.

The inscription around the border is a Church Slavonic version of the hymn “Let All Mortal Flesh be Silent,” and it includes the phrase “considering nothing of this earth,” which was omitted from the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30), but the Bloomington Epitaphios omits the phrase “lord of lords.” Otherwise, the variant of the hymn on the Bloomington Epitaphios is similar to the inscription on the Cozia Aër-

²⁸ Only two documents among Berry’s papers mention this object. One is a letter to Dumbarton Oaks dated November 11, 1968, in which Berry loaned the textile, among other objects, for study. The second document is a receipt dated November 14, 1968 and signed by John S. Thacher. Documents in the files of the Indiana University Art Museum—where the epitaphios was sent in 1972—do not add significant information except the name of the third party in whose name the donation to the IUAM was actually made. The dimensions recorded in the IUAM files (81.3 x 66 cm) included the backing cloth that has since been removed by conservators. Berry’s records included only the dimensions of the epitaphios itself. Burton Y. Berry, “Burton Yost Berry Papers,” (Bloomington: Lilly Library, Indiana University).

²⁹ The complete entry from Berry’s papers reads: “A post-Byzantine embroidered church banner, roughly 65 by 55 cm, showing the placing of Christ in the Tomb, the picture surrounded by a border of an inscription in Greek letters. Cost to me \$2500. (The embroidery is in exceptionally fine condition but on unpacking it needs to be flattened out before being rolled.)” Ibid.

Epitaphios. The word “земљна” on the Bloomington Epitaphios is like the word “земнага” in the same position on the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios, where Church Slavonic words for “earthly” or “of the earth” have been used to translate the Greek word “βροτεία,” rather than the usual word “человѣча” (“human” or “mortal”) found at this point in the hymn in other manuscripts and embroideries, such as the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum (catalogue number 35, figure 59). The word for “food” on the Bloomington Epitaphios (наишж) seems to be a misspelling, or a variant spelling, of “пишж,” which is the word used in this position on the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios. Usually the word used at this point is “снѣдь.”³⁰ The wording of the hymn on the Bloomington Epitaphios is, therefore, more similar to the wording on the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios than it is to the wording of the same hymn on other examples embroidered in Old Church Slavonic.

The use of abbreviation symbols, or “titles,” over the Greek word ΝΗΚΑ, as though the two pairs of letters were abbreviations of longer words, suggests that the embroiderer was not necessarily familiar with Greek. This is an intriguing possibility, but it is weak evidence. Other textiles with Church Slavonic inscriptions also use the titles over the word ΝΗΚΑ, such as the eighteenth-century Antimension of Bishop George Gennadius Bizancij (figure 85). This is not limited to examples that clearly originated in a Slavic-speaking region. One eighteenth-century example, an epitaphios at the Benaki Museum (figure 104), is embroidered with Greek inscriptions, and it also includes titles over the same word, which is spelled ΝΙΚΑ in that case. It is not necessary to pursue this line of reasoning in order to attribute the Bloomington Epitaphios to a particular place.

³⁰ Engström, *Cheruvimskie Pesnopenija v Russkoj Liturgičeskoj Tradicii*, 128–29.

Since the wording of the inscription is very much like the wording of the hymn on the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios, we can begin to focus on Wallachia.

Iconography is another clue that might help us determine where the Bloomington Epitaphios was made. Rather than simply adding the Virgin, John, and other figures to an image of Christ as Amnos, the iconography on the Bloomington Epitaphios is derived from the treatment of the full Epitaphios Threnos iconography in wall paintings or painted icons. The image on the Bloomington Epitaphios is quite similar in composition to a wall painting of the Epitaphios Threnos at the fourteenth-century Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia (figure 130). It is true that we find a similar treatment of the Epitaphios Threnos at Mistra (figures 149–150), but the sixteenth-century icon from Curtea de Argeș (figures 146–147) is closer still in composition to the Bloomington Epitaphios. The similarity between the epitaphios and the icon is so striking that it is tempting to speculate that the embroiderer of the Bloomington Epitaphios was familiar with the icon from Curtea de Argeș. The poses of the myrrophoroi are particularly noteworthy in this comparison (figures 96 and 147). One figure in each work, icon and epitaphios, holds her right hand to her face and her left hand in the air. The similarity is strong enough to suggest, at least, that both artists worked from a common source, but this evidence is not sufficient to attribute the two works to the same place. The icon might have been made somewhere other than Wallachia, and we do not know when it arrived at Curtea de Argeș.

It might be more fruitful to compare the Bloomington Epitaphios to another embroidery. In its technique, including stitching patterns, color palette, and the extensive use of metal-wrapped silk, the Bloomington Epitaphios is very similar to a Wallachian

embroidery now in Moscow (figure 151). The Aër of Neagoe Bășărab is embroidered with an image of the Deposition and an inscription that includes the troparion “Noble Joseph.” Given by Voivode Neagoe Bășărab to the Cathedral of Argeș, which he founded in the early sixteenth century, this textile was made about seventeen years earlier than the epitaphios preserved at the Indiana University Art Museum.³¹ If we assume for a moment that Wallachia is the possible place of origin of the Bloomington, the date of the Bloomington Epitaphios puts it during the period of conflict between Radu Paisie and Vlad Vintilă de la Slatina when the two princes alternated rule of Wallachia between them.³²

Vlad Vintilă was the patron of at least one other embroidery, a podea at the Athonite Koutlounousiou Monastery (figure 152).³³ The Bloomington Epitaphios and the podea at Koutlounousiou are quite different in their figural styles so a close comparison of their techniques would be necessary if the podea were to be useful in making an attribution of the Bloomington Epitaphios to Vlad Vintilă’s patronage. Each piece of evidence I have mentioned would have to be examined more closely than I have done here. Nevertheless, all the circumstantial evidence draws me toward the conclusion that the Bloomington Epitaphios was made in Wallachia, possibly under the patronage of Vlad Vintilă. The element that must be considered more closely in this argument is the technique. Similarities in technique would tend to confirm that embroideries were made

³¹ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 62.

³² Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale* (Bucharest, 1937–1945), 435–57.

³³ Nicolae Iorga, “Duna opere de artă românească din secolul XV la Muntele Athos,” *Buletinul Coisiunii Monumentlor Istorice* 26 (1933): 27–31; Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, Figure 59 between 436 and 37; Petre Ș. Năsturel, “Le deux podéai valaques de Kutlumus (vers 1533),” *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române—Studi și documente românești* 12 (1985): 28–30; Theocharis, “Embroidery,” 487.

in the same workshop. Differences in technique or style might be the result of their having been made at different workshops or by different embroiderers. Whether we can identify any group of textiles that were the products of a single workshop is the question that I will consider next.

2. Workshops and Techniques

As I will explain in this discussion of workshops and techniques, I am skeptical about the possibility of attributing textiles to specific or hypothetical workshops, but many scholars have studied the question of Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroidery workshops over the years. Recently, Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina in particular has studied the workshop associated with the Barlaam Monastery at Meteora, but she has also approached many embroidered textiles with the assumption that certain styles can be attributed to particular workshops.³⁴ Maria Theocharis has taken a similar approach in much of what she has written about embroidered textiles, and she has discussed the work of the embroiderer Arsenios in particular.³⁵ Pauline Johnstone has written about the workshop of Despoineta.³⁶ These scholars have dealt with groups of textiles that can be connected to a particular embroiderer whose name was included in an inscription.

³⁴ Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “Ekklesiastika chrysokenteta amfia”; Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “He aktinovolia tou ergasteriou ekklesiastikes chrysokentetikes tes mones Arkadiou,” *Nea Christianike Krete* 2, no. 19 (1999/2000): 219–49; Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “He techne tes chrysokentikes sto Despotato tes Epeirou,” in *A’ synantese Vyzantinologon Ellados kai Kyprou* (Ioannina: 1999): 165–66; Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “Ho Vyzantinos Epitafios tou M. Meteorou,” *Trikalina* 19 (1999): 307–30.

³⁵ Maria Theocharis, “Le Moine brodeur Arsenios et l’atelier des Meteores au XVIème siècle,” *Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d’étude des textiles anciens* 45 (1977): 31–40.

³⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 125–27.

Working with comparisons of style and technique, it is possible to attribute more examples to an embroiderer whose name is attached even to a single textile. They have also used style as a clue for suggesting that different hands can be detected within a single textile. Vlachopoulou-Karabina has, for example, noted that the faces of some angels on the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis (catalogue number 9, figure 22) are less naturalistic than others. The greater naturalism caused Vlachopoulou-Karabina to speculate that an artist from Constantinople or Thessaloniki, working in a more sophisticated style, contributed to this textile at a workshop in Ioannina, where the other embroiderers worked in a less sophisticated, provincial style.³⁷

This approach to discussing workshops necessarily depends upon the assumption that similarity of style is reliable evidence, even when technique is of variable quality. Pauline Johnstone, in discussing one example attributed to the workshop of Despoineta, considered the inferior technique as evidence that it was mostly the work of one of Despoineta's students, a certain Alexandra named in the inscription with Despoineta (figure 153).³⁸ I am skeptical about such an approach. I doubt that we can safely attribute a group of textiles to a single workshop because they are similar in style. It could be argued that, since "Despoineta" is a common Greek name, the Despoineta referred to in these inscriptions is not necessarily the same Despoineta. It is also possible that style and technique are easily emulated. I do not doubt that there were workshops. We do have references to an imperial embroidery workshop. Theophanes the Confessor, for example, recorded that on 25 December 793 "as a result of a nocturnal thunderstorm, part of the

³⁷ Vlachopoulou-Karabina, "Ho Vyzantinos Epitafios tou M. Meteorou," 328.

³⁸ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 126.

imperial workshop of embroiderers in gold thread situated at the Chrysion caught fire.”³⁹

The question I have is not whether there were workshops, but whether we can argue convincingly for the attribution of a textile to a particular workshop.

When we step back and look at certain comparisons, we might notice some obvious similarities. The Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21) looks like the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19). Does this necessarily suggest that they are the products of the same workshop? Maria Theocharis has suggested that the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is the product of an Athonite workshop because of these similarities and because the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios bears the monogram of the Vatopedi Monastery.⁴⁰ There is nothing implausible about this theory, but the evidence that has been adduced is insufficient to make such a claim. There are also obvious similarities between the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) and the Aër-Epitaphios at the Church of Agios Athanasios (catalogue number 5, figure 16).⁴¹ More than one scholar has noticed these similarities, and one has even suggested that these two aër-epitaphioi are the products of the same workshop. In an article about the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, Anna Muthesius attributes it to a Palaiologan imperial workshop that also produced the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios, the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figure 1), the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figure 5), the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios

³⁹ The term “χρυσοκλαβρίων” in this passage has been translated as “embroiderers in gold thread.” “Chrysion” is a transliteration of “Χρυσίωνα.” Theophanes the Confessor, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and near Eastern History Ad 284–813*, 644, and note 3.

⁴⁰ Theocharis, “Embroidery,” 473.

⁴¹ Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 212; Loula Kypraiou, ed. *Vyzantine kai metavyzantine techne* (Athens: Vyzantino kai Kristianiko Mouseio, 1985), 245.

(catalogue number 3, figure 8), and several other important embroidered textiles of the Palaiologan period.⁴² This is probably going too far. The evidence that Muthesius adduced is not sufficient to draw such conclusions.

Muthesius meticulously analyzed the technique of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, noting special effects such as wire threads twisted together with blue silk in the robes of the Matthew evangelist symbol and the use of silver foil coiled around a white silk core in Christ's loincloth.⁴³ It is curious, then, that Muthesius based her attribution of this and other textiles to an imperial workshop on the "painterly style" rather than the technical data she compiled.⁴⁴ The style of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is indeed painterly, as other scholars have noted, in the sense that the embroiderers imitated a style that we can also observe in certain paintings. Laskarina Bouras described how a close analysis of the technique of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios reveals how the embroiderers were able to create a sense of volume in the muscles. Bouras observed that the technique is more easily understood by analyzing the reverse side of the textile (figure 154) in which she noted the "waves of split stitch following the natural contours of the muscles."⁴⁵ Anna Muthesius thought that the detail on the reverse of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, and the "painstaking embroidery of the back of the epitaphios also suggests it was meant to be seen."⁴⁶ Muthesius proposed that the reverse of the textile would have been visible when this cloth was carried in

⁴² Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 193.

⁴³ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁵ Bouras, "The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki," 213.

⁴⁶ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 187.

procession.⁴⁷ This is an intriguing possibility, but the reverse sides of aëres and epitaphioi are usually concealed by another cloth of plain linen or silk. If the embroiderers meant that the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios should be seen from both sides, this would be a unique example of such an approach to the embroidered image. There is much about the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios that is unique or special, including the quality of the embroidery technique, but I doubt that the reverse was ever meant to be seen.

Laskarina Bouras compared the pose of Christ on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (figure 13) to the pose of Christ in the Epitaphios Threnos painting in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (St. Kliment) at Ohrid (figure 103). Bouras described this pose, with Christ's head leaning back, as "evoking the life-giving sleep."⁴⁸ I am skeptical about giving this pose an iconological significance that refers to the theology behind the event depicted. The pose is common but not universal among images of either Christ as Amnos or the Epitaphios Threnos. More significant is the similarity between the bare-armed lamenting angels that hover above Christ in both the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (figure 15) and the Epitaphios Threnos wall painting at Ohrid (figure 103). Bouras persuasively argued that the embroiderers were familiar with the wall painting. The embroidered image is only the figure of Christ as Amnos, rather than the full Epitaphios Threnos iconography, but the inclusion of details such as the lamenting angels with bare arms and the tilted head of Christ are sufficient evidence to propose that there was some direct or indirect influence of one image on the other. The comparison might even provide some insight into how the embroiderers worked since the figures of Christ and the lamenting angels are mirror images of the figures in the wall painting. The image on the back of the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bouras, "The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki," 213.

textile, however, is oriented in the same way as the wall painting. Is it possible that the embroiderers used as a guide a drawing that was made on the back of the textile?

Bouras has also called attention to the similarities between the style of the Communion of the Apostles scenes embroidered on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (figures 11 and 12) and the style of the same iconography as it was painted in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (St. Kliment) at Ohrid (figure 155).⁴⁹ The poses and the sense of volume in the figures of the apostles are particularly similar in the two works. Both the painting at Ohrid and the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios have also been compared to a wall painting at the Protaton Church on Mount Athos.⁵⁰ The Protaton painting shares with the other works a “voluminous drapery style,” as Muthesius described it.⁵¹ Neither Bouras nor Muthesius proposed a direct connection between the two wall paintings—at St. Kliment, Ohrid, and at the Protaton Church, Mount Athos—but they both suggested that this style seems to have been current in the area around Thessaloniki circa 1300.⁵² The painted program at Ohrid provides us the names of the painters Michael Astrapas and Eutychios.⁵³ Sharon Gerstel has gone so far as to propose that the “detailed representation on the epitaphios of the Communion of the Apostles on either side of the recumbent Christ and the heavy figure style of the Apostles and angels suggest that a noted pair of church painters, Michael Astrapas and Eutychios, were involved in the design of this

⁴⁹ Ibid., 214.

⁵⁰ Ibid; Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189.

⁵¹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189.

⁵² Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 214; Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189.

⁵³ Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries*, 101.

liturgical cloth.”⁵⁴ Again, this might be going too far. It is one thing to suggest that the embroiderers emulated the painters. It is quite another thing to suggest that the painters designed the embroidery. I am unaware of evidence for such a conclusion other than the similarities between the styles of wall paintings and embroidered textiles.

Anna Muthesius also acknowledged the connection between the textile and the painting, as had Laskarina Bouras and S. Kissas, but these scholars suggested that the similarities indicate only that the style was current in Thessaloniki around 1300.⁵⁵ I want to suggest that observing a particular style is only the first step. We ought to combine observations of technique with observations of style before we attribute groups of textiles to the a particular hypothetical workshop. Technical analysis of the sort undertaken by Anna Muthesius can be combined with other observations as part of an argument about when and where a liturgical textile might have been embroidered. In making attributions the best evidence, potentially, is the embroidery technique itself. The data will have to be even more detailed than the information Muthesius listed in her study of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.⁵⁶ Embroidery is an ancient art and techniques have been passed down or rediscovered by successive generations. The presence or absence of a particular technique is not necessarily evidence of anything other than how fundamental certain techniques are, or how durable and widespread certain embroidery traditions have been.

⁵⁴ Sharon E. J. Gerstel, “The Aesthetics of Orthodox Faith,” review of *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, March 23–July 4, 2004, *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 2 (June 2005): 334.

⁵⁵ Bouras cited Kissas. Muthesius in turn cited Bouras’ citation of Kissas. S. Kissas, “La Famille Des Artistes Thessaloniens Astrapa,” *Zograf E* (1974): 35; Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 214; Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189.

⁵⁶ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 181–88.

We can, however, find certain similarities in the handling of the thread that will help us to confirm conclusions based on evidence such as style, or to contradict such an argument. If we observe closely the handling of the gold embroidery on the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan (catalogue number 43, figure 67) we notice that foil-wrapped thread has been used to create contour lines, especially within the draperies on the figures (figure 68). The gold-embroidered contour lines in these draperies are all executed in a wavy pattern that gives the impression that there are no truly straight lines, an approach found even in the architecture behind the figures where the metallic thread is couched in wavy lines. The embroiderers have succeeded in creating a stylized, nervous energy. As similar as this aër is to the Suzdal Aër (catalogue number 25, figure 46), it is not an exact copy. Details such as the jittery handling of the contour lines distinguish the Riazan Aër from what we may otherwise presume is its prototype. Gold thread is used for contour lines on the Suzdal Aër, but the jittery effect created by wavy contour lines is more pronounced on the Riazan Aër. In other words, a simple observation of the technique confirms that different hands worked the two objects. The evidence supports this conclusion, albeit not conclusively since one artist could have attempted variations on the same technique. Even if we did not already know that the dates and names of patrons given in the inscriptions place the two objects at opposite ends of the fifteenth century, we could observe a difference in technique. Since the inscriptions tell us that these objects were made about seventy years apart, the technique of the Riazan Aër can be associated with a particular period. We can therefore reasonably, but not conclusively, attribute to the same period other objects that use this technique.

There are other examples of the technique we find in the Riazan Aër, especially among embroidered textiles associated with St. Cyril's Monastery of the Dormition on Lake Beloye (the Kirillo-Belozersk Monastery). A late fifteenth-century embroidered veil of the Transfiguration (figures 156–157) is similar to the Riazan Aër in the handling of gold thread in the contour lines. The figural styles of these two embroidered textiles are quite different, but there are similarities in the technique, and we can argue that such similarities confirm that the two objects were made at the same time and in the same region. We know the date of the Riazan Aër, and we may reasonably suppose that a textile with a conspicuous similarity in the handling of gold thread was made during roughly the same period. It is not just that the gold thread is couched in wavy lines. The wavy lines are used to highlight contour lines within draperies on the figures. Olga Klykanova has proposed that the iconography, style and paleography of the Transfiguration embroidery point to a workshop in Moscow.⁵⁷ We must take her word for this. It is possible, and we certainly cannot disprove it, but such a statement necessarily assumes that there was a Moscow workshop that produced similar objects. In order to make an attribution to that workshop we must know, rather than speculate, that there was such a workshop and that the workshop in question produced objects of similar iconography and style executed with similar techniques. I will return to this question in the third part of this chapter, but first it will be useful to explain a few of the basic concepts of embroidery technique.

⁵⁷ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 331.

Angeliki Chatzimichaili has provided the best guide to the terms associated with Byzantine embroidery.⁵⁸ The Greek term χρυσοκέντητα (chrysokenteta) is the most common term used to refer to gold-embroidery in general, and it has been applied in modern scholarship to textiles with any amount metallic thread. The term ἀργυροκέντητα (argyrokenteta) simply refers to the analogous technique in silver, but the term chrysokenteta is more common. Silver was often gilt or wrapped as foil around yellow thread to create the illusion of gold. There are several other words for embroidery with metallic thread. For example, the terms συρμάτινα (syrmatina) and συρματέϊνα (syrmateina) refer specifically to wire rather than to foil-wrapped threads. When we refer to gold and silver thread, often we mean quite literally that the metal has been worked into a fine wire that can be treated like thread. It is more common, however, to find foil-wrapped silk of the type that Anna Muthesius observed on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.⁵⁹ That type of thread is quite common on Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroidered textiles.

Almost the entire surface of the Bloomington Epitaphios is couched in foil-wrapped thread (figures 98–99). Wear has revealed how the silver foil was wrapped around yellow silk. Such gilt, foil-wrapped thread creates the appearance of gold thread. Metallic thread, whether foil-wrapped thread or metal wire, is invariably couched onto the surface. That is, the metallic thread is anchored to the surface of the support with another kind of thread, usually silk, rather than stitched through the support. Couching is

⁵⁸ Angeliki Chatzimichaili, “Ta chrysoklavarika-syrmateina-syrmakesika kentemata,” in *Mélanges offert à Octave et Melpo Merlier à l’occasion du 25e anniversaire de leur arrivée en Grèce* (Athens: Institut Français d’Athènes, 1956), 447–99.

⁵⁹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 183.

not used only for metallic thread, but couching is the obvious choice for metal. Stitching wire or foil-wrapped silk through the backing cloth would hide some of the metal on the reverse of the textile. Couching metallic thread onto a textile is apparently an old technique. In the sixth century Paul the Silentiary described what appears to have been foil-wrapped thread couched with silk thread on a support with a woven image.

πάσα δ' ἀπαστράπτει χρυσέῃ στολίζ· ἐν γὰρ ἐκείνῃ
τρητὸς λεπταλέος περὶ νήματα χρυσὸς ἐλιχθεὶς,
σχήμασιν ἢ σωλήνος ὁμοίος ἢ τινος αὐλοῦ,
δέσμιος ἱμερόεντος ἐρείδεται ὑψόθι πέπλου,
ὀξυτέραις ῥαφίδεσσι δεθεὶς καὶ νήμασι σιγῶν.⁶⁰

The whole robe shines with gold: for on it gold leaf has been wrapped round thread after the manner of a pipe or a reed, and so it projects above the lovely cloth, firmly bound with silken thread by sharp needles.⁶¹

The “robe” in question is Christ’s robe as rendered on the textile described by Paul the Silentiary. Earlier in the ekphrasis that includes this passage, a distinction is made between embroidery and weaving, and the figure of Christ is described as part of the woven design. The passage seems to indicate that the woven image of Christ is further decorated with gold thread couched onto the robe of Christ. The technique described here would be quite common in Palaiologan embroidery, although the whole image on the textile would be embroidered rather than woven and then embroidered with further decoration. Whether the technique was common in Byzantine embroidery before the Palaiologan period cannot be known since no examples survive.

The kind of thread described by Paul the Silentiary can be observed in many aëres and epitaphioi (and other embroidered textiles) including the Bloomington

⁶⁰ Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius und Prokopios von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit*, 249.

⁶¹ This is Cyril Mango’s translation. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 89.

Epitaphios (figures 96–99). Gold and silver (whether wire or wrapped silk) is used extensively in inscriptions. In figural embroidery, gold and silver were usually reserved for halos, draperies, or other important features. Often, the metallic thread is couched over padding, such as wool or rough linen fibers. This can be observed on the Bloomington Epitaphios in places where the metal-wrapped thread has worn away (figure 98). The Bloomington Epitaphios and the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) are exceptional for the extensive use of metal-wrapped thread, including the entire background in both cases. The background of the fifteenth-century Aër of the Voivode Neagoe Bășăraib (figure 151) is also covered completely with metallic thread. In each case, the couching patterns are different. Couching patterns are also varied within each textile to create visual texture or to differentiate one figure or area from another when forms couched in metal thread overlap.

When discussing terms applied to specific stitches or couching patterns, subsequent authors tend simply to repeat the information that Angeliki Chatzimichaili provided. In publications by Anna Muthesius and Katerina Zographou-Korre, there seem to be some mistakes in the labeling of diagrams and photographs. Anna Muthesius credited Chatzimichaili as the source for the information in her diagram of couching patterns, but about half the couching patterns are mislabeled.⁶² This is probably a printing error or an editorial oversight. In Katerina Zographou-Korre's *Metavyzantine-neoellenike ekklesiastike chrysokentetike*, photographs seem to contradict diagrams in identifying

⁶² Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 182.

couching patterns.⁶³ This, too, is probably a printing error or an editorial oversight. Maria Theocharis included in her book on ecclesiastical gold embroidery a diagram of couching patterns that agrees with Angeliki Chatzimichaili.⁶⁴ I have consulted all these publications, but the following terms come from the lists given by Chatzimichaili and Theocharis. These terms refer to specific, common couching patterns: καρφωτό (karfoto), ἡ ὀρθὴ ρίζα (orthe riza) and ἡ πλάγια ρίζα or ἡ λοξὴ ρίζα (playa or loxi riza), ἡ ἴσια-σπασμένη (isia spasmeni), ἡ βερέρικη (vererike), οἱ καμάρες (kamares), τὰ καμαράκια (kamarakia), τὰ μπακλαδωτὰ (bakladota), τὰ κοτσάκια (kotsakia), τὸ κοτσάκι (kotsaki), τὸ ἀμύγδαλο (amygdalo).⁶⁵ These patterns are illustrated in the diagram at figure 158.

These are not types of stitches but only couching patterns, patterns in which the metallic thread is attached to the support with another thread. A stitch is produced by pulling the thread through the cloth. Couching is a type of stitch in which one thread is used to attach another thread to the support. This technique can be used to create patterns with the metallic thread attached to the support. In other words, couching is a type of stitch that can be used to create many patterns. “In the strict technical sense gold embroidery knows no stitch but couching,” as Pauline Johnstone noted.⁶⁶ Byzantine embroidery is almost always a combination of stitches in non-metallic thread with metallic thread couched in many patterns. Stitches for non-metallic thread also include the “stem stitch” and the “split stitch” among the most common. In a stem stitch the

⁶³ The diagram on page 262 of Zographou-Korre’s book is correct in its identification of the bakladota and kotsakia couching patterns. The photographs on page 268 are incorrectly labeled. Zographou-Korre, *Metavyzantine-neoellenike ekklesiastike chrysokentetike*, 262 figure 152, and 268 figures 163 and 64.

⁶⁴ Theocharis, *Ekklesiastika Chrysokenteta*, 46.

⁶⁵ Chatzimichaili, “Ta chrysoklavarika-syrmateina-syrmakesika kentemata,” 450.

⁶⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 67.

individual stitches are combined to create lines, straight or curved, and each stitch is created next to the previous stitch. Each begins about halfway along the previous stitch. Split stitch embroidery is very similar. Each stitch begins about halfway along the previous stitch, but it is pulled through the previous stitch so that the thread of each stitch is literally split by the next. Such stitches are almost impossible to distinguish in photographs. As Anna Muthesius has pointed out, stem stitches were used in the faces of figures on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10).⁶⁷ Laskarina Bouras noted the use of split stitches in the body of Christ in that same embroidery.⁶⁸

Stitches and couching patterns tend to have descriptive names, like “stem stitch” or “split stitch,” and this is just as true in Greek as it is in English. The Greek term *καμαράκια* (*kamarakia*—figure 158, 7), for example, simply refers to the vaulted shape of this couching pattern. The same pattern is sometimes called a “Byzantine stitch” in English, perhaps because it so common in Byzantine embroidery. The term *ἀμύγδαλο* (*amygdalo*—figure 158, 11) refers to the almond-like shape of this couching pattern. The term *ὀρθὴ ρίζα* (*orthē riza*—figure 158, 2) means “straight stem” and refers to a couching pattern commonly found in letters in inscriptions (as on the Bloomington Epitaphios, figure 98). The terms *πλάγια ρίζα* or *λοξὴ ρίζα* (*playa* or *loxi riza*—figure 158, 3) refer to the sideways or slanting pattern, and this type of couching also turns up commonly in inscriptions. The term *καρφωτό* (*karfoto*) refers to a pattern in which straight lines of thread are pinned down with anchor threads. The anchor threads are sometimes staggered, which creates a woven effect (figure 158, 1), but the anchor threads simply hold down a metal thread that stretches across the surface. The term *ἴσια-σπασμένη* (*isia*

⁶⁷ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 183.

⁶⁸ Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 213.

spasmeni, i.e. straight but broken) refers to a pattern that resembles karfoto in that it looks like a basket-weave pattern (figure 158, 4). In isia spasmeni, however, the metal thread is pulled back and forth between two parallel sets of anchor threads. There are too many couching patterns and types of stitches, and terms to describe them, to review them all here. That could be a separate study.

Some stitches and couching patterns are common, but embroiderers are creative in how they apply the thread and how they combine stitches and couching patterns to create texture and to differentiate between figures. For example, overlapping halos are couched in different patterns on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 44, figure 70). Joseph of Arimathea's halo is couched in a variation on the kotsakia pattern, while Nikodemus' halo is couched in a karfoto pattern. Christ and the Virgin are often set off from the other figures with different couching patterns in their halos. On the Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos ("Chilandar 2," catalogue number 19, figure 38) Christ and the Virgin have halos couched in a kotsakia pattern, while the halo of the evangelist portrait of John is couched in a kamarakia pattern. In this case, Christ's halo is also cruciform, but the kotsakia pattern is reserved for Christ and the Virgin (see the detail at figure 159). On the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figures 30 and 31), the Virgin and John have the same couching pattern in their halos, while Christ and the angels have kamarakia patterns in their halos. Christ's halo is cruciform once again, and therefore unique, but the kamarakia pattern is used only in Christ's halo and the halos of the angels. As we can observe in these few examples, couching patterns are a tool that embroiderers use to highlight figures, to differentiate forms, and to add variety to the visual texture of an embroidered textile.

Couching patterns, stitches, and other aspects of technique might be among the best clues we have for making attributions. We have very little to go on when discussing hypothetical Byzantine embroidery workshops, but it is the nature of Byzantine Studies to extrapolate from the smallest pieces of evidence to large ideas. In this case of attributing textiles to specific workshops, however, it is not enough simply to cite similarities in style and technique. From the skeptic's point of view, there are other possible explanations for the similarities between the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Agios Athanasios (catalogue number 5, figure 16). Other explanations might include the idea that one textile was well known among embroiderers who chose to emulate it. Both might have been copied from a lost textile. Anna Muthesius is not necessarily incorrect to attribute them to the same workshop.⁶⁹ What kind of evidence would we need to verify such an attribution, or at least to make that attribution more convincing? How can we use the evidence to construct an argument that would not depend upon simply observing similarities or differences in style and iconography? These are the questions I will address in the next part of this chapter.

3. A Proposal for Further Research

Gary Taylor and MacDonald P. Jackson, eminent scholars of early modern English literature, might have something to teach art historians about how to refine our methods. Jackson's recent study of Shakespeare's *Pericles* describes a very specific

⁶⁹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 193.

method for using statistical analysis to test whether attributions hold up under scrutiny.⁷⁰ The method Jackson advocated in that study involves using “Literature Online,” a database of early modern English drama, to run searches for special terms and constructions regarded as characteristic of certain authors.⁷¹ As Jackson noted, “Mistakes in attribution arising from the haphazard and biased accumulation of verbal parallels can be avoided through systematic and comprehensive electronic searches.”⁷² For scholars of literature, to assemble such a database is quite straightforward. The texts, control texts, are simply entered into a database that can be searched for words, phrases, contractions, or any other element of the language in those texts. The results of such searches provide statistical data that can be used to confirm or contradict a hypothesis about the attribution of a play to a certain author. Art historians do not always have words, phrases, or other linguistic material to analyze. Although aères and epitaphioi usually do provide written texts, embroidered inscriptions, in addition to the embroidered image, I am not proposing that the texts on embroidered textiles serve as the only data for comparison. Gary Taylor warned that “Bibliographers and textual critics must begin to do what scientists routinely, and literary critics never, do: take the time to test whether our methods can *prove something we already know*.”⁷³ The same may be said of art historians. It is the idea of attempting to prove what we know that I want to advocate as an important test of art historical methods.

⁷⁰ MacDonald P. Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: Pericles as a Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 193–203.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 193.

⁷³ Gary Taylor, “Middleton and Rowley—and Heywood: *The Old Law* and New Attribution Technologies,” *Paper of the Bibliographical Society of America* 96 (2002): 166–67.

Unless art historians are content to engage only in formal analysis, they must be able to claim that they know with a fair degree of certainty that an object comes from a particular time or place. Otherwise, they are not historians at all. Even if an art historian is unconcerned with an approach that smacks of old methodologies, such as connoisseurship, attributions are always necessary to make a meaningful claim about the social, political, religious, or economic context in which the work was made. If we do not know that an artifact comes from a particular time and place, then it is meaningless to propose a hypothesis about the significance of the object in its historical context. It is, of course, impossible to know for certain that an object was completed, for example, on February 1, 1506. The inscription on the Aër-Epithafios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80) tells us that the embroidery was finished that day, and we have to trust that this is true. It could be a forgery or a mistake. As unlikely as that might be, it is possible. Since the date in the inscription is our best evidence, however, we can claim to know, because of that evidence, that the Aër-Epithafios from the Dobrovăț Monastery was completed on February 1, 1506, and we ought to be able to test that claim, to test what we know. We could make similar claims based on evidence of historical records, provenance, or even comparisons of style, rather than the text of the inscription. The less certain our methods leave us, however, the more important it is to test our methods.

We need, therefore, evidence that will help us to confirm conclusions that we have drawn from other evidence. Scholars of literature have syntax and vocabulary to use as “searchable” data for statistical analysis. Perhaps historians of textiles can devise a similar technique. Art historians have always used many types of scientific analysis. They

have studied pigment, they have X-rayed paintings, and so on. Such evidence, however, is often collected in a “haphazard and biased accumulation” of data. Anna Muthesius, for example, collected important data about the technique of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Her attribution of that work to a Palaiologan Imperial gold-embroidery workshop is based, however, not on such evidence but on elements of figural style. For example, she contrasted the style of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) with the style of the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis, Meteora (catalogue number 9, figure 22).

What is clear is that, within the different schools of Byzantine gold embroidery, stylistic fluidity varies greatly. A certain hardness of outline predominates in purely monastic workshops, such as at the Meteora. What does appear to be significant is that the more flowing painterly style, so evident upon the Thessaloniki epitaphios, does not easily fit in with what may be called a more hierarchic monastic style amongst known pieces.⁷⁴

Muthesius set up an argument that is really only a hypothesis. Her hypothesis is not necessarily incorrect, but we ought to be able to set up a test for that hypothesis.

The next step would be to test whether objects of similar style to the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, objects that Muthesius attributed to a Palaiologan Imperial workshop, have anything else in common. I certainly do not mean to suggest that Anna Muthesius is a poor scholar. On the contrary, one of her observations about the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is part of the foundation on which I will build my argument in Chapter 4 of this study. It is the quality of her scholarship that makes it important to critique one aspect of Muthesius’ methods. If Muthesius is right about the date and the attribution to an Imperial workshop, then her hypothesis about the significance of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, which I will discuss in Chapter 4, will be all the more convincing. Does

⁷⁴ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 193.

the evidence, which Muthesius carefully analyzed on one example, support her claim that the Thessaloniki Aër-Epithafios is one of several objects that we can associate with an Imperial workshop? We would have to subject to similar analysis all the examples that Muthesius attributed to this hypothetical workshop in order to find out whether they have anything in common. Is there, for example, anything consistent among this group in the way the thread itself is handled. Even then, however, we would be testing only whether those examples have something in common in their technique. So, the form of the argument must be considered as well.

To return to the Aër-Epithafios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80), we could group this example with others that we “know,” because of the evidence written in the inscriptions, to have been made in Moldavia during the time of Ștefan cel Mare. The other large aër-epithafioi associated with Ștefan cel Mare are the Aër-Epithafios from the Moldovița Monastery (catalogue number 45, figure 71) and the Aër-Epithafios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 44, figure 69). We might expect that these will have something in common in their technique, even though the figural styles are quite different. If we compare details of these works, we at first notice many differences. The couching pattern in the halo of Joseph of Arimathea on the Aër-Epithafios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery (figure 70), a variation on the kotsakia pattern, has no exact parallel in the other two. A kamarakia pattern is used consistently in the halos in the Aër-Epithafios from the Moldovița Monastery (figure 72). We find yet another couching pattern in the halos of Joseph and Nikodemus on the Aër-Epithafios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (figure 82). The handling of the couching in the Aër-Epithafios from the Dobrovăț Monastery is

tighter and more regular, or precise, than we find in the Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery or the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery. The figural style of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery is also stiffer. There is a great degree of variation in technique, to say nothing of the diversity of styles, even among works that can be associated with a relatively small region (Moldavia) and short period of time (ca. 1490–1506).

Perhaps a better test of our methods would involve objects that can attributed to one workshop, such as the workshop associated with the embroiderer Despoineta of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Or perhaps the evidence needs to be even more specific than couching patterns. Frederick Stamati subjected the Berat Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 13, figures 26–27) to energy dispersive X-ray microanalysis (EDX-RM).⁷⁵ The result was a chemical analysis of the dyes used to color the cloth. Liturgical vestments in treasuries of Athonite monasteries have been analyzed in at least one other study using different methods but designed to determine what organic coloring materials are contained in post-Byzantine textiles.⁷⁶ Regardless of the type of technology used to analyze the textiles, the results are raw data about the types of dyes found in the textiles that were analyzed. Such information could be useful in further study of Byzantine textiles. If we analyzed more examples in this way, we could compare the data gathered from several examples. Such analysis reveals only what dyes were used at one time and place, but with a larger set of data derived from all the extant examples

⁷⁵ Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica,” 141.

⁷⁶ The method of analysis used in one study was high performance liquid chromatography with UV-Vis diode array detection. Ioannis Karapagnagiotis et al., “High-Performance Liquid Chromatographic Determination of Colouring Matters in Historical Garments from the Holy Mountain of Athos,” *Microchimica Acta*, no. 160 (2008): 1.

we might be able to draw significant and logically supportable conclusions from such evidence. With enough data we could begin to use this evidence to confirm or contradict arguments about attributions, to compare the new data to what we can already claim to know because of other evidence. Then the same technique could be applied to objects that we are not able to attribute to a certain time or place using evidence from inscriptions, style, or iconography. It might be impractical, or simply unrealistic, to propose that we attempt to analyze every Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroidered textile with dispersive X-ray microanalysis or any other technological gadget or technique. Data will have to be accumulated laboriously and over a period of many years.

We should also recognize that the data we can use to confirm or dispute arguments about attributions need not derive from chemical analysis of the materials. We can use our eyes. I am not suggesting that there is a solution to this problem, only that it is necessary to recognize that there is a problem with making claims about attribution based on observations of style or haphazardly accumulated technical data. We ought, perhaps, to begin counting threads. If we were to attempt a statistical analysis, analogous but not identical to what scholars of literature can do, we would need a sufficiently large and precise set of data. Such data might include types of couching patterns, but also the types of stitches used, the colors used, the dyes, even the thread count. The number of layers of thread per centimeter in the letters of embroidered inscriptions might fall within a certain range for embroidered textiles that belong to an identifiable group. It is not possible to know whether such evidence would reveal anything. It might prove only that every Byzantine embroidered textile is unique in ways that are not immediately recognizable.

If we assume that, because of their similarities in style and iconography, the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30, figure 54) and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery (catalogue number 31, figure 55) were made in the same workshop, would a close analysis of the technique support this assumption? If we claim that the Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96) and the podea of Voivode Vlad Vintilă (figure 152) shared a patron, would something in the execution of the embroidery bear out this claim? If we were to find some similarities in technique among groups known to belong to the same period or place, or to have been embroidered by the same hand, then that approach could also be used to support other attributions. The kind of evidence we use is actually less important than the form of the argument. The fine technique of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios tempts us to associate it with an Imperial workshop. This is an old tendency in art history, to associate high quality with centers of population and power. We might argue that, if the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is of high quality, then it must have been made in an Imperial workshop where other works of recognizably high quality were also made. If not the quality, then perhaps we could base our argument on a naturalistic figural style. This must remain speculation, however, unless we can find a way to test this claim through a meticulous and systematic analysis of technique and materials.

For now, however, we are left only to speculate. I am simply suggesting that we take care to recognize the limits of our methods. Even a close technical analysis could never verify that Jefimija herself had a hand in the pall embroidered with the “Laud to Prince Lazar” (figure 160), which has been attributed to her because she is the author of

the “Laud.”⁷⁷ If Jefimija herself actually embroidered all the textiles attributed to her, then it ought to be possible to find some evidence to suggest that one person also embroidered the katapetasma for the Royal Doors of the Chilandar (figure 91), and the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36).⁷⁸ If we do not find evidence that one person embroidered those textiles, or at least that one person had a hand in all the embroidery attributed to Jefimija, then it is less likely that Jefimija herself contributed to the embroidery on all the textiles attributed to her. If, on the other hand, we do find evidence that a single person had a hand in all the textiles attributed to Jefimija, it would not necessarily mean that Jefimija herself was that single person. We must understand, then, that close technical analysis can only help us confirm something we claim to know for other reasons. Until we undertake a systematic analysis of all extant Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroideries, much of what we can claim to know about them will be based on observations of style and iconography. We ought at least to be aware of such haphazard and biased accumulations of data.

We also have to be careful to recognize the kinds of evidence that we do have, possibly without realizing it. In addition to the threads and the cloth onto which they were embroidered, we ought to pay attention to material such as wax drippings. On the Bloomington Epitaphios, as on many post-Byzantine epitaphioi that I have observed, there are wax drippings, usually around the border (figure 98). We would have to analyze

⁷⁷ The pall with the “Laud to Prince Lazar” was in the Ravinca and Krušedol monasteries until 1941, and it is now in the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade (inventory number 1921). Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 320.

⁷⁸ The Chilandar katapetasma is in the treasury of that monastery. Dmitrije Bogdanović, Vojislav Djurić, and Dejan Medaković, *Chilandar: On the Holy Mountain*, trans. Madge Phillips-Tomašević and John Beckwith (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska Revija, 1978), 120, figure 99.

the material to be sure that it is wax rather than something else that dripped onto the surface, but wax drippings would be consistent with the liturgical function of an epitaphios. Wax around the border of a liturgical textile might indicate that a textile was used as an epitaphios at some point, since candles are placed on the epitaphios during Good Friday and Holy Saturday. An aër is less likely to have wax drippings because it would have been placed over the diskos and chalice on the altar. Such evidence is not conclusive, of course, but might help us understand which types of textiles were used as epitaphioi and which were used as aëres.

Repairs are possibly important, as well, since new material is often added to worn textiles. Such evidence might help us understand the history of a textile where records of provenance fail. The Bloomington Epitaphios was been subjected to at least two stages of conservation. We know nothing of the history of this textile before 1968, but we know that conservators mounted the Bloomington Epitaphios onto a new cloth sometime before Burton Y. Berry purchased the object. That cloth was removed when the Bloomington Epitaphios came into the collections of the Indiana University Art Museum (compare figures 96 and 97).⁷⁹ Removal of such a cloth might eliminate useful evidence about provenance. A similar cloth was added to the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios Heracleia (catalogue number 18, figure 37). The cloth on the Bloomington Epitaphios is quite different from the cloth added to the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios Heracleia. It might be possible, however, to find examples of textiles that were repaired or conserved with the same kind of cloth as that added to the Bloomington Epitaphios. If the now removed cloth could be associated with a particular place, a museum or monastery that used such

⁷⁹ Berry, “Burton Yost Berry Papers.”

cloth in conserving textiles, then we would have learned one more detail about the history of the Bloomington Epitaphios. Even if the cloth itself is preserved, its removal might have eliminated such evidence. The manner in which it had been attached might also have been useful evidence. Conservators, of course, have to make choices about how much to alter an object from its current state in order to prevent further damage or decay.

We have no extant epitaphioi from before circa 1295, the earliest possible date of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). We have very few extant aëres and epitaphioi for the whole Palaiologan period. Not all of them include inscriptions that help us know when or for whom they were made. For now, many of our assumptions about these textiles must depend upon observations of style and iconography. Some examples have been studied more thoroughly than others. Anna Muthesius attributed the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios to a hypothetical Imperial workshop that also produced the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos, among other textiles.⁸⁰ Sharon Gerstel attributed the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios to a workshop in Thessaloniki where the painters Michael Astrapas and Eutychios might have designed it.⁸¹ The arguments of both Muthesius and Gerstel are equally valid, so whether we agree with one scholar or the other depends on the extent to which we agree with their observations of the evidence.

It is more interesting to speculate about the significance of these textiles in their historical context than it is to count threads, but until we can develop a method of testing assertions like those made by Gerstel and Muthesius, we will have to rely on assumptions and guesses. I am not suggesting that a methodology based on quantifiable empirical

⁸⁰ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 193.

⁸¹ Gerstel, “The Aesthetics of Orthodox Faith,” 334.

evidence replace the discursive analysis of iconography and style. Rather, such a statistical approach ought to be designed only to test the validity of discursive analyses of iconography and style. While it may not be necessary or even helpful to devise some method of testing the efficacy of traditional art historical methods, ideally the study of Byzantine textiles would involve cooperation among scholars of different backgrounds. Specialists in iconography and style ought to work closely with scholars whose expertise extends to the technical characteristics of cloth and thread. I am suggesting here that such scholars extend their interdisciplinary welcome to chemists and statisticians. In the end, however, the study of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* must begin and end with discussions of these objects as images and texts on textiles.

Chapter 4: The Messages of Aëres and Epitaphioi

We do not know, perhaps never can know, just when it was that aëres or epitaphioi were first decorated with embroidery. Related to the question of when is the question of why they became important enough to decorate as elaborately as even the plainest example listed in the catalogue in Part II of this study. In this chapter, I will attempt to argue that aëres and epitaphioi were important sites for the display of the Orthodox identity of the patrons. In Chapter 2 I argued that the iconography on aëres and epitaphioi was an expression of Orthodox Christian theology, and in this chapter I will propose that a name embroidered on an aër or epitaphios identified the person named as an Orthodox Christian. It is clear that the forms of aëres and epitaphioi were determined by their liturgical functions, but is there another reason that the aër would have become so important circa 1300, the period when the earliest extant examples were made?

Anna Muthesius has proposed that the earliest extant epitaphioi date to around the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth century precisely because that is a period during which the iconography would have become acutely relevant.¹ She described the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios as a “re-statement of the Orthodox position after the disastrous submission to ‘Roman primacy’” following the 1274 Council of Lyons.²

The emphasis of the Eucharistic sacrifice is one of “divine unity bestowed upon men.”... The Thessaloniki epitaphios might be interpreted as emphasising this fact. God, as the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit, adopted humanity in His Son, and it was in His Son that the spirit was active. The Orthodox Emperor represented Christ on earth, and the Christian Empire was a reflection of the

¹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 194–95.

² *Ibid.*, 194.

Kingdom of Heaven. An Imperial commission, of the type of the Thessaloniki epitaphios, would have acted as confirmation of these Orthodox views.³

In other words, Muthesius seems to be suggesting that an aër-epitaphios like the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios can be interpreted as a rejection of Latin Christianity in general and as a display of Byzantine and Orthodox Christian identity. Would such an image, however, have been clearly understood as particularly Orthodox?

As Muthesius acknowledged, “This type of interpretation of Byzantine gold embroidery also clearly emphasises the political nature of the Imperial patronage involved.”⁴ This point is more important than whether we can interpret the iconography as specifically rejecting the filioque. Since the patron was the Emperor, then the textile necessarily had a political significance attached to its liturgical meaning. The textile is meant for liturgical use, so it necessarily associates the patron with a theological position. The message of a liturgical textile that bore the name of the patron and was displayed during the Great Entrance or on Holy Saturday would be clear. If the iconography is Orthodox, then so is the Emperor—or, since the Emperor is Orthodox, then so are the iconography and the interpretation of theology that the iconography might imply.

Any work of art is an expression of ideas. In the case of liturgical textiles, the most obvious ideas are theological. In this chapter I will discuss the possibility that aëres and epitaphioi also display political ideas, sometimes very specific ideas, sometimes rather general displays of power or authority. Much of this chapter is necessarily speculative. I cannot prove that any patron intended to do more than present a textile to a church. Nonetheless, several examples offer clues that allow us to propose additional

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 195.

explanations. In the first part of this chapter, I will address the question of whether certain aëres or epitaphioi carried any meaning other than the strictly liturgical meaning discussed in Chapter 2. In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss how aëres and epitaphioi were used to display Byzantine continuity in the late fifteenth century. In the third part of this chapter, I will consider the question of what aëres and epitaphioi have meant to collectors in the modern world.

1. Aëres, Epitaphioi, and Patrons

If we follow in the direction toward which Anna Muthesius points us, then the first datable aër-epitaphios we ought to consider is the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). The inscription on this textile reads, “Remember, Shepherd of the Bulgarians, during the sacrifice, the ruler Andronikos Palaiologos.” The Andronikos Palaiologos in question was almost certainly Andronikos II, and the “Shepherd of the Bulgarians” was probably Gregory, Archbishop of Ohrid.⁵ If Muthesius is right, then this textile, a gift from the Emperor to an Archbishop, may be interpreted as an affirmation of Orthodoxy. Andronikos II opposed the Union of the Churches.⁶ It should not be surprising, then, that we find a conspicuous monument to his Orthodoxy dating to the early fourteenth century. We must also consider other meanings, however, since the Emperor and the Archbishop in question had a history.

Gregory supported Andronikos II during the civil war that ended on 24 May 1328 when Andronikos II was deposed by his grandson Andronikos III.⁷ If the attribution to

⁵ Ihor Ševčenko and Jeffery Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 26 (1981): 11.

⁶ Alice-Mary Talbot, “Andronikos II,” in *ODB*, vol. 1, 94.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

Andronikos II is correct, then 1328 was the *terminus ante quem* for the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos. The *terminus post quem* would be 1312, since that is the date when Gregory became Archbishop of Ohrid.⁸ Ohrid itself was contested territory, claimed by Epirus and Bulgaria but eventually given by Andronikos III to the Serbian Stefan Uroš IV Dušan in 1334.⁹ We can, therefore, read the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as a kind of contract between the Emperor and the Archbishop. As long as Gregory, the “Shepherd of the Bulgarians” commemorated the Emperor in the liturgy at Ohrid, the Emperor would in turn remain loyal to the Archbishop. That is, the Archbishop was identified by the inscription on the textile as the Emperor’s representative in this contested territory, at least as far as the Emperor’s authority over the Orthodox Church was concerned.

Muthesius argued that the epitaphios became an important site for the display of Orthodox theology in the wake of the Union of Churches in 1274.¹⁰ Were other liturgical vestments, hierarchical vestments, and priestly insignia understood in the same way as the aër and the epitaphios, as a display of Orthodoxy and Byzantine identity? Warren Woodfin has argued that hierarchical vestments such as the sakkos were used to differentiate the church hierarchy from the imperial court.¹¹ A sakkos such as the “Major Sakkos” of the Metropolitan Photios (figures 88 and 89) identified the person wearing it as a representative of Christ.¹² It is a display of the wearer’s sacerdotal power. Such textiles were often diplomatic gifts, however, gifts from the Emperor or a high-ranking

⁸ Ševčenko and Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” 10–11.

⁹ Alexander P. Kazhdan, “Ohrid,” in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1514.

¹⁰ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 194.

¹¹ Woodfin, “Late Byzantine Liturgical Vestments,” 234.

¹² *Ibid.*, 234–35.

official to a church or monastery. Such a gift has a double meaning. It announces the Orthodox faith of the patron, but it also announces the authority and even the rank of the patron. The “Major Sakkos” of Photios is decorated not only with iconography of Christ, but also portraits of Photios himself (figure 90), the Grand Prince of Moscow Basil I, his wife, his daughter Anna, and Anna’s husband, the future Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (figure 88).¹³

Portraits of the patrons are rare on aëres or epitaphioi. No examples exist before the sixteenth century. Donor portraits were common on other types of textiles. Ștefan cel Mare is represented on several textiles, including a large embroidered image of the Crucifixion at the Putna Monastery (figures 161–162).¹⁴ That textile might have been a katapetasma or a podea, or simply a hanging, and it probably was not intended to be used as an aër or an epitaphios. Only in the post-Byzantine period do we find portraits on aëres, such as the sixteenth-century Aër of Neagoe Bășărab, from the Cathedral of Argeș (figure 151), on which portraits of the patron and his family are presented with an image of the deposition. On the seventeenth-century Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino, from the Cotroceni Monastery (figure 132), we find a group portrait of the patron and his family under the iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos. On earlier aër-epitaphioi we do find embroidered commemorations, as on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). This associates the textile with the commemorations that interrupt the Cherubikon during the Great Entrance.

¹³ Elisabeth Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins: Analyse iconographique*, Acta universitatis Upsaliensis, Figura 17 (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiskell, 1976), 31.

¹⁴ Musicescu, *La Broderie Médiévale Roumaine*, 39, catalogue number 20; Musicescu and Draguț, *Broderia veche Românească*, 39, catalogue number 34.

Even a textile without a portrait of the patron can be a visual reminder of the patron's association with that church or monastery. If we use a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* argument and assume that there is no significance other than the liturgical significance in the iconography and inscriptions on aëres and epitaphioi, how can we characterize the association of these textiles with emperors, kings, and other important patrons? We would have to conclude that they were intended only as expressions of piety even though only the very wealthy could afford to pay for gold-embroidered textiles. This is a reasonable but deeply unsatisfying conclusion from the point of view of a scholar in the twenty-first century, a period in which we tend to read political significance into any act of a powerful historical figure. I would suggest that a political message or motive was not at odds with a liturgical message or religious motive during the Palaiologan period. To view religion and politics as somehow incompatible or mutually exclusive is anachronistic.

The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos is not unique. Stefan Uroš II Milutin, the grandfather of Stefan Uroš IV Dušan, was named in an inscription on an aër-epitaphios (catalogue number 2, figures 5–7). That inscription reads “Remember, O God, the soul of your servant Milutin Uroš.” The formula of this inscription is slightly different from the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos, but both conform to what we might expect to hear in a church during the Cherubikon, as discussed in Chapter 2. Svetislav Mandić has argued that this formula was used on embroidered textiles only when the person named was already dead.¹⁵ I am skeptical about this theory, but Slobodan Ćurčić agreed with Mandić, and Ćurčić further

¹⁵ Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 65–80.

argued that the Aër-Epithafios of Milutin Uroš was meant to decorate the tomb of the Stefan Uroš II Milutin.¹⁶ Regardless of its actual, intended function, whether funereal or liturgical, the Aër-Epithafios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin necessarily has an additional function that would have been apparent no matter how the textile was displayed. It identifies the person named in the inscription as an Orthodox Christian. In a period when the Serbian kraljevi, or kings, were competing for territory with the Byzantine Emperor, identification with the Orthodox Church would lend legitimacy to their territorial expansion because they, too, were Orthodox. It is of course probable that the patron, whether that patron was Stefan Uroš II Milutin himself or someone who survived him, thought of this aër-epithafios as only a show of Orthodox piety. A display of piety becomes conspicuous on an object of such luxury, especially when the person commemorated was a king.

We can connect some extant Palaiologan aër-epithafioi to particular events that occurred during the Palaiologan period or, at least, to participants in those events. The Aër of John VI Kantakouzenos (catalogue number 7, figures 19–20) was commissioned by the emperor who had come to power as a result of the civil war that ended in 1347. John VI put down the Zealots at Thessaloniki.¹⁷ He embraced Palamism, a uniquely Orthodox Christian brand of mysticism that endorsed hesychasm and was closely associated with the monasteries of Mount Athos. Gregory Palamas himself, the important proponent of hesychasm, was appointed as the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki.¹⁸ In this

¹⁶ Ibid., 71–72; Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine Loca Sancta?,” 252.

¹⁷ Donald M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, C. 1295–1383* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 107–09.

¹⁸ Ibid., 107.

epitaphios we see the monogram of the Athonite monastery for which the textile was made, Vatopedi, and a dedicatory inscription identifying the patron, John Kantakouzenos (figure 20). The Emperor knew the hermit Sabas of Vatopedi who had been considered for appointment as the new Patriarch in 1347.¹⁹ Can we conclude that this aër-epitaphios carried a political message, whether explicit or implicit? The message would be an affirmation of the Emperor's adherence to Orthodoxy, specifically to a view of Orthodoxy associated with Mount Athos. More than a gift to a favored Monastery, the textile was a sign of the Emperor's endorsement of Palamism. The audience would have been the monks of Vatopedi, but that was an important audience with whom to curry favor, especially after a period of political unrest the background to which included a theological component.

Another aër-epitaphios that invites interpretation as a display of the patron's Orthodoxy is the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios Heracleia (catalogue number 18, figure 37). As Lazar Mirković has proposed, Antonios of Heracleia is presumably the same Antonios, Metropolitan of Heracleia, who attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439).²⁰ It is tempting to interpret this textile associated with Antonios of Heracleia as an affirmation of Orthodoxy by one of the Byzantine contingent at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Again, it would have implied the rejection of the Union of the Churches. Another aër-epitaphios of the same period is associated with an official of rank lower than Emperor or Metropolitan. The Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes named in the

¹⁹ Ibid., 86.

²⁰ Silvestros Syropoulos, *Les Mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, ed. Vitalien Laurent, Publications de l'Institut français d'études byzantines (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971); Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 22–23.

dedication on an aër-epitaphios at the Victoria and Albert Museum (catalogue number 21, figure 41) is very likely the diplomat of that name who was a prominent member of the Eudaimonoioannes family in the Morea.²¹ It should not be surprising that a diplomat, and an official working for the Morean despotes, would take advantage of the aër-epitaphios as a medium for the display of Orthodox Christian piety. This is speculation, of course, and we cannot prove that Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes meant to do anything other than provide an aër-epitaphios to a church or monastery that needed one.

Some examples make the use of aër-epitaphioi as possible sites for the display of political messages more explicit. The fourteenth-century Albania Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites (catalogue number 13, figure 26) includes an unusually informative embroidered inscription.

+This most sacred and holy aër of the most holy Theotokos the unshaken was made at the expense and by the efforts of the graceful Bishop Kalistos of Glavenica and Belagrad [Berat] in the month of March, on the 22nd, in 6881 [1373]. +Ruler of the living, alas, like a dead, breathless corpse. Under the rule of the great princes of Serbia and Romania and all Albania the brothers Georgios and Balsha. +By the hand of Georgios Arianites and [a] gold-embroiderer.

The name George Arianites seems to refer to the embroiderer. If so, then this is the earliest Byzantine embroidered liturgical textile that we can associate with the name of an artist. Equally important is that this inscription provides the name of the patron, Bishop Kalistos, who is identified as the patron rather than a person to be commemorated. Bishop Kalistos is the patron, but the inscription also mentions the Balsha brothers. This represents a reversal of the usual arrangement. A church official used this epitaphios to recognize the local political authority. The Balshas were the Slavic-Albanian lords of the

²¹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 121.

Shköder region.²² In a bid to unify Albanian lands, the Balshas had taken advantage of the death of Stefan Uroš IV Dušan to extend their territory to the northern Albanian plain.²³ They had also expanded their territory, by marriage, to include Vlorë and Berat in 1372.²⁴ The inscription, by including so many names, invites us to consider the possibility that the function of this textile was not limited to its use in the performance of the liturgy. It could also have been read as a sign that the bishop officially recognized the rule of the Balshas.

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58), offers another opportunity to see how an aër-epitaphios might be used as site for a political message. Like the Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites, the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia provides a rather detailed inscription.

In the year 6960 (or 6964) from holy charity this aër was created and placed by the pious Grand Prince of all Rus' Vasilii Vasilievich and his son Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich and the pious Grand Princess Maria and their son the noble Prince Iurii Vasilievich in the church of Saint Sophia of the Holy Wisdom at the order of the grand princes Vasily, Ivan, and Iurii in great Novgorod as an offering to the archbishop abbot Euphemios.

The date in this inscription is disputed. Some scholars have read it as 6960 (1451/2), and others have interpreted the date as 6964 (1455/6).²⁵ Either date means that this piece was made during the reign of Basil II, the Grand Prince of Moscow. Basil II must be the

²² Alain Ducellier, "Genesis and Failure of the Albanien State in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Studies on Kosova* (vol. 155 *East European Monographs*. Boulder, CO: 1984; reprint, Alain Ducellier. *L'Albanie entre Byzance et Venise, Xe-XVe siècles*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), 10.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 34; Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 268; Dmitrii Vlas'evich Ainalov, *Geschichte der russischen monumentalkunst zur zeit des grossfürstentums Moskau*, ed. Reinhold Trautmann and Max Vasmer, *Grundriss der slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933), 121.

Vasilii Vasilievich mentioned in the inscription. This was a period of war and consolidation of power for Basil II. A dynastic war had ended in 1456, but Basil had attacked Novgorod in 1441, and he attacked Novgorod again in 1456.²⁶ Events in either 1451/2 (a period of relative peace with Novgorod) or 1455/6 (a period of war with Novgorod) might help to explain the gift of this particular aër-epitaphios if we assume that it was given as a diplomatic gift to make one or more political announcements. Basil II certainly would have had good reason to try to appease archbishop Euphemios, and the function of this aër as a liturgical textile explains only part of its significance.

The title “Grand Prince of all Rus’” is used in the first part of the inscription to identify only Basil II while his son Ivan is identified as “Grand Prince Ivan.” Iurii is described only as “noble.” Basil was concerned to identify his successor, and coins minted in this period describe Basil and Ivan as “Lords of all Rus’.”²⁷ While the designation “of all Rus’” is reserved on the aër-epitaphios for Basil himself, the phrase after that refers to Ivan as *his* son. Only after mentioning Basil and his son Ivan does the inscription go on to mention Maria and *their* (их) son Iurii. This embroidery, then, makes a show not only of the piety of Basil II and his family, but identifies Ivan as his heir. The Ivan in question would be Ivan III (Ivan the Great), the grandfather of Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible). The archbishop Euphemios mentioned at the end of the inscription must have been Euphemius II of Novgorod (1429–58).

Novgorod had opposed Moscow in the dynastic wars, and supported Dmitrii Shemiaka, Basil II’s first cousin and rival in the dynastic war. Dmitrii Shemiaka died in

²⁶ Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia: 980-1584*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 270.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 271.

1453, and the dynastic war finally ended in 1456.²⁸ After the forces of Basil II attacked in 1456, Novgorod was defeated. Novgorod retained limited autonomy, but was forced to cede territory and pay taxes to the grand prince, among other conditions of the Treaty of Iazhelbitsy.²⁹ If Basil II's aër-epitaphios had been sent to Euphemius before 1456, it can be interpreted as a diplomatic gesture that also announced Basil's claim to the title "Grand Prince of all Rus'" and identified his son Ivan as his heir. We can interpret this aër-epitaphios as part of an effort to persuade Euphemios to back Basil II. If the gift were made in 1456, it could still be interpreted as an announcement of Basil's title and Ivan's status as Basil's heir, but it would also be a reminder that Novgorod had fallen to the "Grand Prince of all Rus'." Before 1456, this aër-epitaphios would have been an attempt to curry favor. After the Treaty of Iazhelbitsy, it would have been an announcement of Novgorod's new sovereign.

Dmitrii Shemiaka was also the patron of a fifteenth-century aër-epitaphios (catalogue number 33, figure 57) with a long inscription. As Basil II's rival, Dmitrii Shemiaka enjoyed the support of Novgorod, so it is not surprising to find an aër-epitaphios made under his patronage and with an inscription quite similar to, but more elaborate than, the inscription on Basil II's aër-epitaphios. Dmitrii Shemiaka's aër-epitaphios is the older of the two, by at least two years and as many as eight years. The iconography, style, and proportions of Basil II's aër-epitaphios are all very similar to an aër-epitaphios associated with Basil II's father (catalogue number 20, figure 39). That Basil II would also commission an aër-epitaphios is not surprising, nor is it surprising that it would resemble one commissioned by Basil I. What is surprising is how similar the

²⁸ Ibid., 270.

²⁹ Ibid., 277.

inscription on Basil II's aër-epitaphios is to the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Dmitrii Shemiaka. It is possible to speculate that Basil's aër-epitaphios was made in response to Dmitrii Shemiaka's, but that is not necessary in order to understand how these objects could be used as propaganda.

Like the inscription on the Basil II's aër-epitaphios, the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Dmitrii Shemiaka (catalogue number 33, figure 57) fits well into the historical context of a dynastic war.

In the year 6957 [1449], indiction seven, as Grand Prince Demetrius Iurievich was in Great Novgorod, at the Grand Prince's behest the present aër was made at the Temple of the Holy and Great Martyr George on the 23rd day of August of the same year by his pious Grand Princess Sophia, and at the time of [their] son the pious Prince Ivan it was dedicated to the Church of Christ's Holy and Great Martyr George at the Iuriev Monastery in Great Novgorod at the time of Euphemios, archbishop of Great Novgorod [and] of the Archimandrite Misael, for the remission of sins, and for the sake of the salvation of our souls and of those of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, in this age and the one to come. Amen.³⁰

The Grand Prince Demetrius Iur'evich mentioned in the inscription was Dmitrii Shemiaka.³¹ In the context of a dynastic war, that the inscription mentions Prince Ivan and other "children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren" takes on a special significance in addition to the explicit request for salvation. That the inscription also mentions Euphemios is more significant if we know that Novgorod backed Dmitrii Shemiaka in his struggle against Basil II.

Among the unusual aspects of the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Dmitrii Shemiaka is that it gives such a precise date, including the day, month, year, and indiction. It also names the place where it was made and implies that the Grand Princess

³⁰ This translation is adapted from a translation by Julia Komarova. Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 317–18.

³¹ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 268–70.

Sophia herself embroidered it. This is an unusual piece of information, but Sophia would not be the only woman to whom such an embroidery may be attributed. The inscriptions on a few aër-epitaphioi name women as the patrons, and some of those women may also have also had a hand in the embroidery. It is not necessarily the case that a woman named as a patron was also one of the embroiderers, but it is a possibility that more than one scholar has raised. As Pauline Johnstone wrote, “Two ladies who enjoy a traditional reputation as embroideresses were the Serbian princess Euphemia, and Maria of Mangop, second of three wives of Stephen the Great of Moldavia.”³² Several embroideries have been attributed to the Serbian nun Jefimija or “Euphemia.” Jefimija was the monastic name taken by Jelena the widow of the despotes of Serres Jovan Uglješa.³³ After her husband was killed in the battle of Marica in 1371, Jefimija sought refuge in the court of Prince Lazar. Lazar himself was killed in the battle of Kosovo on 15 June 1389. Jefimija and Queen Milica, Lazar’s widow, retired together to the monastery of Ljubostinje, where they were essentially a court in exile.³⁴

The Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) is one of three embroideries attributed to Jefimija. Of the other two, one is a famous pall (figure 160) embroidered with a poem by Jefimija, her “Laud to Prince Lazar,” which must have been embroidered after 1389, the year of the battle of Kosovo, and probably before Jefimija’s death in 1405. The third embroidered textile associated with Jefimija is a katapetasma (figure 91) for the imperial doors of the iconostasis at Chilandar on Mount

³² Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 58.

³³ Mirković, *Monahinja Jefimija*, 1–7; Dušan Janković, *The Nun Euphemia*, trans. H.M. Stansfield Popović (Belgrade: The Yugoslav Association of University Women, 1936).

³⁴ Mirković, *Monahinja Jefimija*, 10; Janković, *The Nun Euphemia*.

Athos (ca. 1399).³⁵ Whether Jefimija was only the patron or she herself also embroidered the textiles associated with her is a question that cannot be answered. Her retirement to monastic life means that it is certainly plausible that she embroidered them, or at least had a hand in the actual needlework, but Jefimija also accompanied Queen Milica on diplomatic missions. As Pauline Johnstone has pointed out, Jefimija's diplomatic duties may have left little time for embroidery.³⁶

It is significant that the earliest name we can possibly associate with an embroiderer of an aër-epitaphios is Georgios Arianites. That name appears in the inscription on a fourteenth-century Albanian aër-epitaphios (catalogue number 13, figure 26). In that case it is not entirely clear whether Georgios Arianites was actually the embroiderer or he played some other part in the commissioning or making of the textile. We have very few named embroiderers of any period, and many were men. The name of the embroiderer Arsenios is associated with several epitaphioi of the sixteenth century.³⁷ It was only in the seventeenth-century, however, that embroiderers began routinely to include their own names in embroidered inscriptions. The name Despoineta is among the most well known. That name appears on three epitaphioi of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, two at the Benaki Museum, Athens, and one at the Victoria

³⁵ The pall with the "Laud to Prince Lazar" was in the Ravinca and Krušedol monasteries until 1941, and it is now in the collection of the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade (inventory number 1921). The Chilandar katapetasma is in the treasury of that monastery. Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 320; Bogdanović, Djurić, and Medaković, *Chilandar*, 120, figure 99.

³⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 59.

³⁷ Ibid., 60, 92, 107; John A. Koumoulides, Lazaros Deriziotis, and Stravroula Sdrolia, *To monasteri tes Tatarnes: istoria kai keimelia* ([The Monastery of Tatarna: History and Treasures]. Athens: Ekdotiki Hellados, 1991), 138.

and Albert Museum, London.³⁸ From the beginning of the seventeenth-century, more names of women occur in inscriptions that identify the embroiderer than names of men.³⁹ We do have the names of men who embroidered or designed embroideries during the post-Byzantine period, however, such Arsenios, who appears to have been associated with a workshop at Meteora in the sixteenth century, and Christopher Žefarović, a Serbian artist who was active during the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ The name Žefarović is associated with three extant epitaphioi.⁴¹ The impressive epitaphios now in the National Museum of Art, Bucharest, Romania, is typical of the “baroque” style of Christopher Žefarović (figure 139).

We do know, then, that men were important embroiderers, but it is also true that women have been important practitioners of the art of embroidery. In Russia in the sixteenth century, the tsar’s daughters lived a quasi-monastic life devoted to prayer and needlework.⁴² Sigismund von Herberstein, an ambassador to Russia during the sixteenth century, reported that needlework was the only approved topic of conversation for aristocratic Russian women.⁴³ It is impossible to know, however, to what extent embroidery was executed by men or by women in any region during the Byzantine period. That the artist lived in a monastery might have been a more important trait than sex in determining who did or did not embroider liturgical textiles. To address the

³⁸ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 125–26; Chatzidaki, *Ekklesiastika kentemata Mouseiou Benake*, 27–29, 33–34.

³⁹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 60.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 92, 127–28; Maria Theocharis, “Christoforos Zefar,” in *Diadromes sto Vyzantio: Epifyllides kai Dialexeis tes Marias Theochare* (Athens: Vyzantio & Christianiko Mouseio, 2006. Original Publication *Καθημερινή* 12 May 1963), 185–91.

⁴¹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 127.

⁴² Natalia Lvovna Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Eve Levin (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999), 96.

⁴³ Ibid., 95.

question of the extent to which the art of embroidery fell within the purview of women is beyond the scope of this study. I am more concerned with the question of patronage and what we may learn about the patron from the inscriptions and iconography on the aëres and epitaphioi they commissioned. Before the sixteenth century, when women were named in inscriptions, they were usually identified as the patrons or wives of patrons. While it has sometimes been assumed that women named as patrons also had a hand in the embroidery, that is impossible to prove, and it is not the most interesting conclusion that we could draw from the evidence of a woman's name in the inscription.

When we have the names of women on embroidered textiles this information is rare and valuable evidence for the lives of women of any rank. The Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal (catalogue number 25, figure 46) provides a clue about the what would motivate a woman in Russia in the early fifteenth century to commission a large, embroidered liturgical textile. The embroidered inscription in the border around the central panel tells us that "this aër was made by Ogrophiena Ko(n)stantinova as her prayer to the Holy Mother of God, the Virgin, that our child-bearing may be not unfulfilled." Here is a clear case when we can discern another layer of meaning overlaying the bare liturgical function of an aër. This textile is a prayer to the Virgin to remedy the patron's childless condition. The message is specific to the patron, and that has affected the iconography. Around the border are hagiographic scenes from the life of Anne, the Mother of Mary, iconography that would have a special significance for a woman hoping to bear a child. Derived from the apocryphal Protevangelium of James, the cycle of scenes around the border concern Joachim, Anne,

and Mary and include a panel in which Anne is blamed for her childlessness.⁴⁴

Ogrophiena's position as patron is a sign of her wealth, but her status within the fifteenth-century Russian nobility was contingent upon her ability to bear a child.

Unfortunately, the identity of the Ogrophiena mentioned in the dedication is unknown. Agraphena was the name of the daughter-in-law of Anna, the patron for the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan, which is the other aër with the Communion of the Apostles.⁴⁵ If the usual date (1410–1416) assigned to the Suzdal Aër is correct, however, then Anna's daughter-in-law cannot be the same person as the Ogrophiena mentioned in this inscription. Ogrophiena may be the name adopted by someone who took monastic orders. For example, Evdokia, the daughter of the Prince Dmitrii of Suzdal and the wife of Dmitrii Donskoi, adopted the name Evfrosinia on taking monastic vows in 1407.⁴⁶ Since the inscription on the Suzdal Aër asks the Virgin to intercede so that Ogrophiena may bear a child, a woman who had already taken monastic vows is an unlikely candidate.

The name "Ogrophiena" has not been convincingly connected to a woman of the appropriate period, even one who might also have been known by another name. Some scholars have suggested that the "Ogrophiena Konstantinova" was either the wife or the daughter of Dmitrii Donskoi's son Konstantine.⁴⁷ Konstantine died childless in 1433.⁴⁸ K.

⁴⁴ J. K. Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48–67.

⁴⁵ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁴⁷ K. I. Tikhonravov, "Shitaia pelesna XV veka a Suzdal'skom Rozhkestvenskom sobore," *Izvestiia imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva* 1: 212–14; V. N. Shchepkin, "Pamiatnik zolotnogo shitia nachala XV v.," *Drevnosti: trudy izvestiia moskovskogo arkheologicheskago obshchestva* XV, no. 1–2 (1894): 35–68; Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

G. Serebryakova speculated that the preoccupation with childlessness in the inscription and in the nature of the hagiographic scenes around the border point to Konstantine's wife Anastasia who died in 1419.⁴⁹ This is the best guess as to Ogrophiena's identity, but it assumes that Anastasia took the name Ogrophiena, which we do not know to be the case. As Serebryakova observed, proposed answers to the question of Ogrophiena's identity will remain firmly within the realm of speculation unless more can be learned about the women of early fifteenth-century Russia.

Serebyakova was also correct to point out that, while the inscription tells us "this aër was made by Ogrophiena Konstantinova," the phrase "was made" probably refers only to patronage as in other such dedications.⁵⁰ The same phrase was used in the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II, from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58). Ogrophiena was the patron of the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal. Whether Ogrophiena also embroidered any part of it is something the inscription does not tell us. The same may be said of the patron of the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan (catalogue number 43, figure 67). The inscription informs us that "this aër was commanded to be made for the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in the city of Pereiaslavl-Riazan by the noble and pious and Christ-loving Grand Princess Anna and her son the noble and pious and Christ-loving Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich of Riazan and bishop Semeon of Riazan and Murom." Grand Princess Anna was the patron, not necessarily the embroiderer.

⁴⁸ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 254; Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

⁴⁹ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

We can deduce more about the significance of the inscription and the meaning of the iconography to Anna than we can about whether Anna had a hand in the embroidery. We also know more about the Anna who commissioned the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan than we know about Ogrophiena. Grand Princess Anna was the sister of Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow, and she had been acting as regent for her young son, the Ivan of Riazan mentioned in the inscription.⁵¹ This may help to explain the choice of subject for the scenes around the border. Like the Suzdal Aër, the Riazan Aër includes hagiographic scenes from the life of St. Anne around the border. Grand Princess Anna sought to expand the territory of Riazan, a policy she passed on to her daughter-in-law who would in turn serve as regent for Anna's grandson.⁵² While Ogrophiena, the patron of the Suzdal Aër, was concerned about being childless, Grand Princess Anna was interested in securing a future for her son, the Prince of Riazan, or she was at least concerned to expand the territory of Riazan on her son's behalf. Not only did the patron share her name with the subject of one of the main characters in the Protevangelium of James, Anna also shared with the Virgin's mother a special concern, or hope, for her offspring.

Even when women are named as the patrons of Byzantine and post-Byzantine liturgical embroideries, those women are presented as wives, daughters, or mothers. They were associated with men, just as Ogrophiena was identified as "Ogrophiena Konstantinova;" or they acted as surrogates for men, as Grand Princess Anna acted on behalf of her son, the Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich of Riazan. Even though these were women of nobility, wealth, and power, they were presented, even on aëres and epitaphioi,

⁵¹ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 24.

⁵² Ibid.

as subordinate to men. One exception might be the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36). On that aër-epitaphios we find this inscription: “Remember, O Lord, the soul of your servant the empress of Serbia Ephemelia the nun with the daughter of the queen of Serbia the nun Eupraxia.” If “Ephemelia” is in fact the Serbian nun Jefimija, then we could interpret this textile as a display of Jefimija’s status as part of the Serbian court in exile. The titles of the women make their status explicit. “Ephemelia” or Jefimija was the widow of John Uglješa and daughter of Caesar Vojhna, and she is identified in the inscription as *kaisarissa* (empress). Eupraxia is identified as *basileissa* (queen). I would argue, however, that even here we have women acting on behalf of men, although the men were deceased. The presentation of their titles might be construed as an act of defiance by a court in exile, but these women were allowed to wield only the power of diplomacy, and the power of art patronage, after the deaths of their husbands.

Perhaps the most famous image of a woman on any post-Byzantine embroidery is the portrait of Ștefan cel Mare’s second wife Maria of Mangop on Maria’s tomb cover (figure 163). This embroidered textile has sometimes been referred to as an “epitaphios.”⁵³ The term “epitaphios” is misleading in this case. It refers only to the function of the cloth as a tomb cover. This was not an epitaphios in the sense of a textile used to represent Christ in the tomb on Holy Saturday. The inscription on the tomb cover of Maria of Mangop reads, “This is the cover of the tomb of the servant of God, the pious and Christ-loving lady of John Stephen, voivode of the Land of Moldavia, Maria, who passed away to [her] eternal dwelling in the year 1476, on the 19th [day] of the month of

⁵³ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 59.

December, Friday, at the fifth hour of the day.”⁵⁴ Maria of Mangop’s real significance to Ștefan cel Mare is made clear in the image on her tomb cover. The embroidery on Maria of Mangop’s tomb cover includes her monogram in the upper right corner of the border and the monogram of the Palaiologos family in the lower left corner of the border.⁵⁵ In the upper left and lower right corners we find the imperial double-headed eagle.⁵⁶ The Palaiologos monogram is repeated in the arch around the head of the figure. Maria of Mangop came from a Crimean family named Theodoros, and she was also connected to the Komneni of Trebizond as well as the Palaiologos family.⁵⁷ Maria of Mangop was Ștefan cel Mare’s connection to the Byzantine imperial family, and her tomb cover reduced her to an emblem of that connection. The question of why the connection to the Byzantine Empire was important to Ștefan cel Mare brings us to the second part of this chapter.

2. Byzantium after Byzantium

The famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga is a complex, controversial, and fascinating historical figure in his own right. Anti-Semitic and xenophobic, Iorga was a nationalist, a deputy in the Romanian parliament, and briefly Prime Minister of Romania.⁵⁸ Iorga was sympathetic to Mussolini and supportive of Romanian fascist

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, volume 4, 205; Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 34; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 59.

⁵⁸ Radu Ioanid, “Nicolae Iorga and Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 3 (July, 1992): 467.

leaders, but members of the fascist Iron Guard assassinated Iorga in 1940.⁵⁹ Iorga was also a historian with a particular interest in Romanian art and architecture.⁶⁰ The Romanian 1 Leu note bears Iorga's likeness on one side and an image of the sixteenth-century Cathedral of Argeş on the reverse.⁶¹ Iorga's own nationalist ideology pervades his writing on Romanian history and art and links his books to the decades in which Iorga wrote them. Rather than reducing Iorga's work to a mere curiosity for historiographers, however, his nationalism is perhaps all the more reason to reevaluate Iorga's ideas about the significance of the Byzantine Empire to post-Byzantine and modern nations with a "Byzantine" history.

In his 1935 study *Byzantium after Byzantium*, Nicolae Iorga outlined a theory of Byzantine continuity after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.⁶² "Many new things would come to light," as Iorga observed, "but deep down the unyielding Byzantine continuity would remain."⁶³ Iorga summarized his theory of "Byzantium after Byzantium" in the preface to that study:

Byzantium, with all it represented—not as the authority of a dynasty, or as the domination of a ruling class, things that could disappear in a catastrophe, but as a complex of institutions, a political system, a religious formation, a type of civilization, comprising the Hellenic intellectual legacy, Roman law, the Orthodox religion, and everything it created and preserved in terms of art—did not disappear, and could not disappear with the fall, in succession, in the fifteenth century of its three capitals: Constantinople, Mistra, and Trebizond.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 467–68.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Iorga, *Les Arts Mineurs*; Iorga and Balş, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien*.

⁶¹ This was the 10,000 Lei note before the conversion of the currency in July 2005 when the National Bank of Romania simply dropped four zeros from all their bank notes.

⁶² The book was originally published in French as *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'Histoire de la vie byzantine*. Bucharest: Edition de l'Institut d'études byzantines, 1935. Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 7, note 2.

⁶³ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 25.

To understand Iorga's original theory, we must realize that what Iorga had in mind was a specific set of political, economic, and cultural phenomena of the post-Byzantine period. Iorga traced the activities, such as the education and the diplomatic ventures, of the Byzantine aristocracy, and of persons who claimed descent from Byzantine aristocracy. Beginning in the sixteenth century there was always a sense that Byzantium could be restored, and this is what Iorga meant by the idea of Byzantine continuity.⁶⁵ Moldavian and Wallachian princes, in particular, saw themselves as successors to "imperial" Byzantium, according to Iorga.⁶⁶ "Around these princes," Iorga wrote, "a whole new aristocracy of Greeks, arrived from all the provinces there, far from the dangers of Constantinople, and thus recreating Byzantium on the banks of the Danube."⁶⁷ Iorga thought that "Byzantium after Byzantium" died in the nineteenth century when Greek nationalism became more concerned with classical antiquity than with Byzantinism.⁶⁸

Since the nineteenth century, however, Greeks have certainly been capable of invoking Byzantine history as part of their national identity. In a play on words Paul Stephenson altered the phrase "*Byzance après Byzance*" to "*Basile après Byzance*" for the title of a chapter of his 2003 book *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer*.⁶⁹ Stephenson's approach to the idea is slightly different from Iorga's. Focusing on the significance of one Byzantine Emperor for modern Greece, Stephenson described how the legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer (i.e. Emperor Basil II) was adapted to the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 129–54.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 232–33.

⁶⁹ Paul Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.

circumstances of the twentieth century. As Stephenson observed, “the facts that Basil’s best known struggles were against the Bulgarians, and that they took place in Macedonia, made him a compelling figure to Greeks who were engaged in the modern struggle against the Bulgarians for control of Macedonia.”⁷⁰ Propaganda posters during the Balkan wars of the early twentieth century used titles like “The Bulgar Eater” (*O Voulgarophagos*) and “the Bulgar Slayers” (*Oi Voulgaroktonoi*) on images of Greek soldiers at war with Bulgarians.⁷¹

Iorga’s phrase “*Byzance après Byzance*” referred to a tradition of Byzantine nationalism but also specifically to “a complex of institutions” that outlived the Byzantine Empire until Byzantinism was replaced by a philhellenism obsessed with classical antiquity.⁷² We can revive the idea of “Byzantium after Byzantium,” although not in quite the same way as Paul Stephenson has done, to describe something a little different from what Iorga meant by it. Stephenson’s usage is certainly apt for a study of Byzantinism in the twentieth century. In an essay on “The Byzantine in Roumanian and the Roumanian in Byzantine Art,” Iorga observed, “As art, as culture, Byzantium is an abstract conception which can be transferred by circumstance to other countries, to serve other races.”⁷³ Iorga’s own preoccupation with medieval Romanian history and Orthodox Christian art is good evidence for a resurgence of Byzantium as “an abstract conception” in the twentieth century. It is important to understand Iorga’s view of Romanian history in the context of his anti-Semitic and pro-monarchist views and his support for the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁷¹ Ibid., 123–25.

⁷² Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 233–34.

⁷³ Nicolae Iorga, *My American Lectures* (Collected and arranged by Norman L. Forter. Bucharest: State Printing Office, 1932), 131.

reunification of Bucovina, Bessarabia, and Transylvania with Romania.⁷⁴ Iorga himself used history, and art history in particular, to invoke Romania's Byzantine and Orthodox Christian past.

Nevertheless, while Stephenson's usage is very specific, Iorga's idea of "Byzantium after Byzantium" can be adapted, and even turned on Iorga himself, so that it resembles theories that explain revivals of classical and Gothic architectural styles in Western Europe. It is also tempting to examine Iorga's ideas, and Iorga's evidence, through the lens of postcolonial theory, a project unfortunately beyond the scope of the present study. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the Byzantine legacy, especially the Orthodox Christian component of that legacy, was not a revival in Orthodox Christian countries. It was a survival of traditions that, in art, could be adapted as part of a national style. As J. B. Bullen observed, in a book about Byzantine revivalism in Western European culture, Byzantine style in places like Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Greece was "essentially vernacular."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the legacy of the Byzantine Empire can be used and adapted in almost any way by any country that had been in the Empire's orbit. If we consider the post-Cold War era, Iorga's notion of "Byzantine continuity" might help us to understand why an aër-epitaphios of the Byzantine period would be considered an appropriate image for the modern nation of Albania to issue on a postage stamp (figure 28).

The Berat Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 13, figures 26–28) is not simply a famous medieval work of art in Albania. It is a link to that nation's heroic, medieval past. The meaning of that textile for modern Albania is necessarily complex, and it would

⁷⁴ Ioanid, "Nicolae Iorga and Fascism," 469–71.

⁷⁵ J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2003), 228.

require a different kind of research than I have undertaken in order fully to unravel the significance of this Orthodox Christian textile for a predominantly Muslim, formerly communist nation. Robert Elsie has written, “As opposed to their Greek and Serbian neighbors, the Albanians have never had a ‘national’ religion, with which they could identify as a people.”⁷⁶ It should not surprise us, however, to find a fragment of Albania’s medieval history presented on a postage stamp. The complex history of their country is what Albanians have in common. The simplest explanation of the significance of the Berat Aër-Epithafios on a postage stamp is that Albania was able to use the textile as a cultural artifact to claim medieval Albanian history as part of the modern nation’s identity. A textile associated with the Balshas connects modern Albania to its medieval past, then, although the textile itself can be described as “Byzantine” only in the sense that it is an Orthodox Christian liturgical textile that was made during the Byzantine period in a place that had once been part of the Byzantine Empire.

Orthodox Christianity is still very much linked to its origins in the Byzantine Empire. In a prefatory note to the 1974 publication *Stavronikita Monastery: History, Icons, Embroideries*, Basil, the Superior of the Stavronikita Monastery, expressed an idea similar to Nicolae Iorga’s theory of “Byzantine continuity” couched in specifically religious terms and linking both the Orthodox Church and Greek national identity to their Byzantine past.

One of the striking features of Greece today is the number of people striving to acquire self-knowledge, searching for a modern Greek national identity.... It is fair to say that the whole of the Holy Mountain is a spiritual survival of Byzantium, a Byzantium elevated from the plane of an earthly state and temporal history to that of the Church and eternity. By the same token, an icon is not

⁷⁶ Robert Elsie, *A Dictionary of Albanian Religion, Mythology, and Folk Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 125.

simply a work of art: it is a revelation of the way the world lives—the whole world of space and of time—when it has been through the experience of liturgical prayer and sacramental worship, by which all things are transfigured and made incorruptible. That which is merely created belongs for a certain time to a certain person; that which is uncreated, or has been transfigured by the grace of the Holy Spirit, belongs for all time to all people. This explains the catholic nature and universal mission of Mount Athos, since it is an icon of Byzantium....⁷⁷

The book in which this note appeared was an early example of a kind of publication that has become common in the wake of the revival of monasteries of Mount Athos: catalogues of the treasures of Athonite monasteries. The Stavronikita Monastery had declined during the twentieth century, and the site was even briefly abandoned in the 1960s.⁷⁸ Basil (or Vasileios) was invited to take control of Stavronikita in 1968.⁷⁹ By the early 1970s Stavronikita and other Athonite monasteries had begun to experience a revival. As Basil's prefatory note makes clear, the book was intended to present the treasures of Stavronikita not only in the context of this revival of Mount Athos but also as a display of Byzantine continuity. Then Iorga was possibly premature in declaring that "Byzantium after Byzantium" had died in the nineteenth century.

If we return to Nicolae Iorga's original meaning of "*Byzance après Byzance*," however, we can begin to understand why Romanian princes would have taken such an interest in fostering the monasteries of Mount Athos and in cultivating monasteries at home. Other than the obvious sense of duty, of stewardship of Orthodox monasteries, that an Orthodox Christian prince might be expected to demonstrate, such patronage would also demonstrate loyalty to the idea of a Byzantium that could be resurrected or at least

⁷⁷ Christos Patrinelis, Agapi Karakatsanis, and Maria Theocharis, *Stavronikita Monastery: History, Icons, Embroideries*, trans. Timothy Cullen ([Athens]: National Bank of Greece, 1974), 11.

⁷⁸ Graham Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 175–76.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

sustained in exile. Princes who saw themselves as heirs to the Empire could preserve Byzantium as “an abstract conception” in the treasuries of monasteries. Beginning in the fourteenth century, as textiles and documents in their treasuries reveal, the monasteries of Mount Athos enjoyed the patronage of Romanian princes, including the Wallachian voivode Vlad III Dracula (also known these days as Vlad Țepeș or Vlad the Impaler), and Vlad’s first cousin the Moldavian voivode Ștefan cel Mare.⁸⁰ I would suggest that Romanian princes and other Orthodox Christian rulers took such an interest in fostering the monasteries of Mount Athos precisely because Athos was “an icon of Byzantium.”

Ștefan cel Mare is one of the most important rulers of the early post-Byzantine period whom we can characterize as an example of Byzantine continuity in Romania. The works of art associated with Ștefan cel Mare as a patron link him to Byzantine emperors just as strongly as did his marriage to Maria of Mangop. Ștefan cel Mare was a patron of architecture, wall painting, and embroidered liturgical textiles in Moldavia. Although Ștefan cel Mare commissioned liturgical textiles of many types, the *aër* and the *epitaphios* were types of liturgical textiles that may have had a particularly strong significance as an expression of Byzantine continuity. As Anna Muthesius has suggested, the *aër*-*epitaphios* can be interpreted as a specifically Orthodox Christian type of object.⁸¹ Regardless of whether the object was understood as Orthodox, the object did have a specifically liturgical function. This explains, at least in part, why the iconography on *aëres* and *epitaphioi* has rarely been completely “narrative.” The “liturgical” image of Christ as *Amnos*, with attendant deacon-angels, is usually retained among the figures in the “narrative” *Epitaphios Threnos* iconography precisely because Christ is presented as the

⁸⁰ Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 80–81.

⁸¹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 194–95.

Eucharistic sacrifice that participates in the “divine nature and by this communion becomes unchangeably God.”⁸² The association of an Emperor with a textile that bears an image of Christ would also call attention to the role of the Emperor as Christ’s representative on earth.⁸³

Perhaps it would be going too far to suggest that every aër or epitaphios was used by its patron as something more than a simple expression of Orthodox faith. In the case of certain patrons, however, we can appropriately interpret the aër-epitaphios as a site for the display of Orthodox Christian and, therefore, Byzantine identity. That certainly seems to be true of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). Can we interpret Ștefan cel Mare’s patronage of liturgical textiles as a display of Byzantine continuity? The tomb cover of Maria of Mangop explicitly displayed Ștefan cel Mare’s connection to Byzantine imperial families (figure 163). A large embroidered image of the Crucifixion includes a donor portrait of Ștefan cel Mare (figures 161–162), a sign of his piety and of his activities as a patron. It is a commonplace in histories of medieval Romania that Ștefan cel Mare regarded himself as a defender of the Orthodox Christian faith.⁸⁴ If Anna Muthesius is correct about the significance of the image on aër-epitaphioi, I would extend her argument to suggest that inscriptions on aères and aër-epitaphioi that Ștefan cel Mare commissioned (catalogue numbers 40, 41, 44, 45, and 49) placed the patron in the role of Emperor, and the three large, extant aër-epitaphioi

⁸² John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, 27.

⁸³ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 194.

⁸⁴ Eugen Denize, *Stephen the Great and His Reign* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Institute Publishing House, 2004), 74; Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, volume 4, 147–301.

associated with Ștefan cel Mare displayed his Orthodox Christian identity (catalogue number 44, figure 69; catalogue number 45, figure 71; catalogue number 49, figure 80).

The inscriptions on aër-epitaphioi associated with Ștefan cel Mare are lengthy and detailed, and it is not a coincidence that the longest and most detailed inscriptions on embroidered liturgical textiles appear on aëres and epitaphioi. The size of these textiles must have made them attractive sites for long inscriptions. It is more important to bear in mind how the aër and the epitaphios were displayed during the performance of the liturgy. An aër inscribed with the name of the patron carries with it the possibility that the patron would be mentioned in the commemorations that interrupt the Cherubikon during the Great Entrance. An epitaphios inscribed with the name of the patron may have been displayed in the naos of the church during Holy Week, as it would be in modern practice.

The question of literacy, of whether the audience for these textiles could read the inscriptions on them, is probably answered by the fact that these textiles were presented to monasteries where the monks and priests were the most important audience. Another group at whom the messages on these textiles were directed would have been the boyars, the local nobility. We cannot know whether the inscriptions would have been read aloud to a congregation. Amy Papalexandrou has suggested that the significance of an oral performance of an inscription “could be reduced to the commemorative possibilities of its onomastic ascriptions.”⁸⁵ In other words, the name in the inscription is the essence of the inscription’s message. Perhaps this is true of the inscriptions on Ștefan cel Mare’s aër-epitaphioi regardless of whether the audience read them or heard them spoken aloud.

⁸⁵ Amy Papalexandrou, “Echoes of Orality in the Monumental Inscriptions of Byzantium,” in *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. Liz James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 180.

While donor portraits of Ștefan cel Mare were included in wall paintings and on other types of textiles, the inscriptions on the large aër-epitaphioi mention the patron's name and title, the names of the patron's father, wife, and children, and the name of the monastery for which each aër-epitaphios was made. The inscriptions cite "the will of the Father, the aid of the Son, and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit" as the source of Ștefan cel Mare's patronage. They cite "the grace of God" as the source of Ștefan cel Mare's authority as "lord of all Moldavia." The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 44, figure 69) identifies it as the earliest of the large aër-epitaphioi associated with Ștefan cel Mare:

By the will of the Father, the aid of the Son, and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, John Stephan Voivode, lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, son of Bogdan Voivode, with the most pious Maria and with their beloved children Alexander and Bogdan-Vlad, made this aër at the monastery of Putna for the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God and always Virgin Mary in the year 6998.

The inscription mentions "the most pious Maria," Ștefan cel Mare's third wife, Maria Voichița. The inscription also mentions their children, potential heirs. This is a very similar inscription to the inscription on Basil II's aër-epitaphios (catalogue number 34, figure 58). The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery (catalogue number 45, figure 71) follows the same formula as the inscription on the Putna Aër-Epitaphios.

By the will of the Father, the aid of the Son, and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, John Stephan Voivode, lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, son of Bogdan Voivode, with the pious princess Maria and with their beloved children Alexander and Bogdan-Vlad, made this aër at the monastery of Moldovița for the Church of the Annunciation of the most Holy Mother of God in the year 7002, March 1.

These inscriptions announce several important pieces of information about the patron, the source of his authority, and his heirs. The message would be clear to any Moldavian

boyar who read, or heard, the inscription. Ștefan cel Mare was the prince of Moldavia.

The inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80), the last aër-epitaphios that Ștefan cel Mare commissioned, is slightly different from the inscriptions on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Putna Monastery and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery because it was completed after the death of Ștefan cel Mare.

The very pious and Christ-loving John Stephan Voivode, Lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, had this aër begun for the monastery of Dobrovăț, but it was incomplete at his death and his son Bogdan Voivode, by the grace of God lord of all Moldavia, with his mother the lady Maria, had it finished and gave it as promised, for the rest of the soul of the saintly lord Stephan Voivode and for his health and safety in the year 7014 February 1.⁸⁶

The inscription presents Bogdan, Ștefan cel Mare's son, as the new prince of Moldavia. The author of the inscription has taken pains to make the relationship between Bogdan and Ștefan perfectly clear. As successful as Ștefan cel Mare was, and even though he made a show of his Orthodox Christian piety, Ștefan cel Mare was a pragmatist who apparently advised his son to pay tribute to the Turks, to side with the Ottoman Empire in order to sustain Moldavia's relative independence.⁸⁷ It was possibly very important, then, for Bogdan to emphasize his relationship to his father in order to continue Ștefan cel Mare's policies.

A full analysis of the political and economic circumstances that Ștefan cel Mare faced is beyond the scope of this study. It is tempting, however, to contrast Ștefan cel Mare with his less successful Wallachian cousin Vlad III Dracula. Vlad III Dracula, or Vlad Țepeș, had been forced to walk a diplomatic tightrope between Catholic Hungary and

⁸⁶ The phrase "his health and safety" presumably refers to Bogdan's health and safety, since Ștefan cel Mare was dead.

⁸⁷ Denize, *Stephen the Great and His Reign*, 198–200.

the Ottoman Empire with disastrous results.⁸⁸ Ștefan cel Mare faced many of the same enemies and diplomatic challenges, but perhaps he chose more wisely when he sided with Poland in 1459, for example, rather than Hungary.⁸⁹ Vlad Țepeș is well known for his preferred method of capital punishment, but Ștefan cel Mare also impaled enemies.⁹⁰ Vlad Țepeș is known for attempting to suppress the power of the Wallachian boyars and to exert his authority as prince.⁹¹ Ștefan cel Mare faced similar challenges in his domestic policy, and he treated Moldavian nobles just as harshly as Vlad Țepeș treated Wallachian nobles in the effort to centralize government in the power of the prince.⁹²

Perhaps Ștefan cel Mare was more successful because he took every opportunity to have his image or name displayed in a wall painting or on an embroidered textile. This is speculation, of course, since the lack of such art associated with Vlad Țepeș could simply be an accident of history. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the possibility that, by embracing his role as a patron of monasteries and ecclesiastical art, Ștefan cel Mare purchased the support of the regions those monasteries served. Ștefan cel Mare was also able to use church art, including *aër-epitaphioi*, to announce his connection to the Byzantine Empire, his Orthodox Christian identity, and his claim to the titles “voivode”

⁸⁸ Kurt W. Treptow, “The Social and Economic Crisis in Southeastern Europe in the Time of Vlad Țepeș,” in *Dracula: Essays on the Life and Times of Vlad Țepeș*, ed. Kurt W. Treptow, *East European Monographs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 77.

⁸⁹ Denize, *Stephen the Great and His Reign*, 45–46.

⁹⁰ Constantin C. Giurescu, “The Historical Dracula,” in *Dracula: Essays on the Life and Times of Vlad Țepeș*, ed. Kurt W. Treptow, *East European Monographs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 15.

⁹¹ Treptow, “The Social and Economic Crisis in Southeastern Europe in the Time of Vlad Țepeș,” 73–74.

⁹² Denize, *Stephen the Great and His Reign*, 14; Treptow, “The Social and Economic Crisis in Southeastern Europe in the Time of Vlad Țepeș,” 73–74.

and “lord of all Moldavia.”

3. R. F. Borough and Burton Y. Berry

The Byzantine and post-Byzantine aëres and epitaphioi listed in the catalogue in Part II of this study are now in museums or in the treasuries of monasteries. Some are still in the places for which they were intended, such as the Putna Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 44, figure 69). Others have been moved deliberately to museums, such as the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10). In many cases, however, there are gaps in the records of provenance that mean we may never know where they came from and how they got where they are. An Aër-Epitaphios at the Patmos Monastery (Patmos 2, catalogue number 39, figure 64) falls into that category. The sixteenth-century Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96) is of mysterious origin, but we know that the American collector Burton Y. Berry purchased it sometime before 1968.⁹³ Berry, an avid collector of textiles, found that Greece was not the best place to pursue that hobby because “several Athenian collectors, notably among them Mr. Anthony Benaki and Mrs. Helen Stathatos, were acquiring everything that was first rate as it appeared.”⁹⁴ Benaki and Stathatos were, according to Berry, “ardent patriots who did not wish first class Greek objects of the past to leave the country.” Anthony Benaki’s collection is now the Benaki Museum in Athens. The Benaki Museum contains several important Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroidered liturgical textiles, including a very famous example of the seventeenth century from the workshop of Despoineta (figure 135).

⁹³ Berry, “Burton Yost Berry Papers.”

⁹⁴ Burton Y. Berry, *Near Eastern Excursions* (privately printed, [1989?]), 72.

That Anthony Benaki and other prominent Greek collectors would take a special interest in Orthodox liturgical textiles is not surprising. Orthodox Christian textiles were part of Greek history, and Benaki's collection includes objects from every phase of Greek history. Nicolae Iorga might have been surprised to discover how enthusiastic Greek collectors became in their quest for relics of their Byzantine history. It is more challenging, however, to try to understand why one "collector" who was not an Orthodox Christian would go out of his way collect an epitaphios. An article by R. F. Borough, Chaplain of the Crimean Memorial Church in Constantinople (Istanbul), relates the adventures that Borough had while attempting to acquire an embroidered epitaphios.⁹⁵ The article, "A Recent Visit to Nicaea," is not about an epitaphios so much as it is about the lengths to which the author, an Anglican clergyman, was willing to go to rescue a liturgical textile from Muslims and to preserve what he perceived as an emblem of Christian piety. The article is entertaining, but it is disturbing and even deeply offensive. Perhaps that is part of what makes it fascinating and all too topical for a reader in the twenty-first century.

I have mentioned Borough's article because I believe that it is relevant to the present study for several reasons. Most importantly it demonstrates the continued significance in the modern world of a particular type of liturgical textile. A member of the Anglican Clergy in the early twentieth century was willing to go to great lengths, as he saw them, to secure this Christian textile. Borough's attitude is typical of how such textiles have been perceived. They are not only sacred objects in the manner of relics and icons, nor are they merely tools for the celebration of the liturgy. They are emblems of

⁹⁵ See Appendix C. R. F. Borough, "A Recent Visit to Nicaea," *The Christian East* 6 (1925): 66–70.

Christian identity. In Borough's case, the epitaphios was also an emblem of European identity. The article also provides an interesting contrast with descriptions of the kind of collecting that went on during much of the twentieth century. R. F. Borough's account of his rollicking adventure is quite unlike the rather tame tales of expatriates related by the important American diplomat and collector Burton Y. Berry.⁹⁶

I will return to Borough's article, but it will be useful first to contrast Borough with Burton Y. Berry. Berry's attitude was considerably less xenophobic than Borough's, and his attitude toward the objects he collected was that of an amateur scholar. Borough was not an art collector, so his motives were also quite different from Berry's. Berry collected some objects because he wanted to preserve examples of art that he admired, art that he wanted to share with others in the United States. Berry apparently collected other objects simply because he could. For example, Berry purchased the Bloomington Epitaphios without really knowing what it was. The only documents in Berry's papers that mention his epitaphios identify it as "A post-Byzantine embroidered church banner."⁹⁷ This is not a completely incorrect description, but it does not really tell us what the object is. It suggests that Berry was unfamiliar with the type of object he had purchased. Berry also identified the letters of the inscription as "Greek" when they are actually Cyrillic.⁹⁸

In his enthusiasm for collecting, Burton Y. Berry was conscious of emulating and even competing with other collectors of textiles, including Helen Stathatou, Alan John

⁹⁶ Berry, "Burton Yost Berry Papers."; Berry, *Near Eastern Excursions*.

⁹⁷ This description comes from a letter to Dumbarton Oaks dated November 11, 1968. Berry, "Burton Yost Berry Papers."

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Bayard Wace, and especially Anthony Benaki.⁹⁹ The Benaki museum is a monument to collecting motivated by nationalistic sentiment. Burton Y. Berry's papers make it very clear that one of Berry's motives for collecting was, in contrast to both Antonis Benakis and R. F. Borough, to invest his money in something that could only appreciate in value especially once it was shipped off as loans to various museums in the United States.¹⁰⁰ Berry deliberately concerned himself with "minor arts" such as embroidered Turkish towels, jewelry, and small bronze objects. In *Out of the Past*, his memoir about the Istanbul Grand Bazaar, Berry wrote:

Most of the antique bronze objects that I bought in the Bazaar were really insignificant although authentic appendages of larger objects, whose interest developed as they took their appropriate place in a series of similar objects. Individually they were nothing; as a group they became a "collection" and hence of some educational value. The making of a collection was a form of creating wealth and that was always a stimulating exercise. I enjoyed examining these little artifacts of other times and occasionally buying them. They had certain distinct advantages over complete objects: they cost very little, they were not wanted by local museums or great collectors, and, for study purposes, they presented the same problems as complete major objects. Additionally, they had an appeal to me because they were of the people, not of the state, or of the king, or of God.¹⁰¹

On one hand, Berry's interest in "minor" arts is interesting, because he regarded small objects as "of the people." On the other hand, Berry's attitude about collecting might

⁹⁹ Burton Yost Berry, *Out of the Past: The Istanbul Grand Bazaar* (New York: Arco, 1977), 23.

¹⁰⁰ Berry's papers include meticulous and numerous documents recording his donations and loans to museums: lists he made of objects that he sent, and receipts sent to him by museums. One use that Berry found for his collection was to loan an object to a museum, make of gift of that object to a friend, and allow the friend to donate the object to the same or another museum. The object's value as a donation was then credited to the friend for tax purposes. This approach allowed Berry to transfer the value of the objects he collected without ever using money. Berry paid for the objects when he purchased them and then the Internal Revenue Service reimbursed Berry's friends for part of the value of their donations.

¹⁰¹ Berry, *Out of the Past*, 108.

seem archaic to a twenty-first-century scholar concerned with issues such as cultural patrimony and the integrity of the archeological record. In the early twenty-first century, such questions are perhaps more controversial than ever, as a recent spate of books on either side of the issue attests.¹⁰²

In explaining his own policy, Berry considered the ethics of collecting, but he was also careful not to condemn the policies of other collectors:

I never bought a major bronze, marble, or silver antiquity in an Eastern Mediterranean country, although many were offered to me, because I felt that such objects belonged in the museums of the country where they were found. The local authorities at the time that I was an active collector were aware of my attitude, and appreciated it, and perhaps because of it, were very helpful to me in learning about and buying bronze artifacts, old coins, and elements of jewelry, objects that were mass-produced in antiquity and of which examples existed in local museums in quantity and of a quality that often was superior to what I possessed.

While I never regretted my policy in purchasing objects, I learned over the time to be slow in passing judgment on people who acted differently from me. I was influenced in this direction by the fact that I knew of several instances where large bronze statues were melted for their metal value by the finders and large marbles were burnt for lime because they could not be sold as antiquities. It is true that these were of secondary quality, badly damaged, and would not be considered acceptable for exhibition in any major museum. But to a small museum which had nothing similar, they were something, and consequently the destruction was a loss to someone. But it is also true that some important objects were exported and whether that was “bad” or “good” is a moral judgment that can vary according to the time and circumstances.¹⁰³

In the twenty-first century, at a time when organizations like SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone) have been devoted to combating the illicit antiquities market, in the aftermath of events like the looting in Baghdad in 2003, Berry’s rationalization of his collection might seem quaint. Nevertheless, we ought to give Berry credit for having

¹⁰² See, for example, Britt Peterson’s review of four books that have been published in the first decade of the twenty-first century and that address these questions. Britt Peterson, “Tales from the Vitrine,” *The Nation*, January 26, 2009, 30–33.

¹⁰³ Berry, *Out of the Past*, 109–10.

thought about the issue at all. It is more interesting for the point that I want to make here that Burton Y. Berry's motive for collecting an epitaphios was quite different from R. F. Borough's motive for traveling to Nicaea to buy an epitaphios.

The epitaphios in the Indiana University Art Museum was just one of many purchases that Berry made. For Berry, collecting was the avocation of an amateur scholar. The objects had value for Berry as artifacts and investments. Borough, however, tracked down and purchased the epitaphios from Nicaea because he "felt it ought to be done."¹⁰⁴ He was, in this sense, acting as a Briton on behalf of Christendom. Borough was moved to pay what he considered a high price for an epitaphios out of a sense of duty. In his account of the purchase, when the price is raised from "200 liras (about £20)" to 225 liras Borough calls it "extortion."¹⁰⁵ He paid the extra because he wanted the ordeal to end and also because he felt that he was ransoming a Christian object that had fallen into Muslim hands. The business transaction itself was yet another aspect of the whole affair that made Borough uneasy. This is quite different from Burton Y. Berry's feelings about collecting, which Berry found to be a "stimulating exercise."¹⁰⁶

We know exactly when and where Borough made his purchase of an epitaphios. The circumstances of Berry's transaction, when and where he purchased the epitaphios now at Indiana University, are unknown. It might also have taken place in Turkey, but only the amount that Berry paid (\$2,500 US) is recorded. Why the objects were for sale, a matter of speculation for both Borough's epitaphios and Berry's epitaphios, might be very much the same: the geographical displacement of the original owners. Other

¹⁰⁴ Borough, "A Recent Visit to Nicaea," 66.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.: 66 and 68.

¹⁰⁶ Berry, *Out of the Past*, 108.

possibilities are easily imagined, but the political conditions of the region during the first half of the twentieth century mean that liturgical textiles were often transported from one place to another (especially from Turkey to Greece) by refugees. A look at the records of provenance of liturgical textiles in the collection of the Benaki Museum in Athens easily confirms that many of the objects were brought to Greece from Asia Minor. Burton Y. Berry sent his epitaphios from Istanbul to Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, but Berry's epitaphios was not necessarily purchased in Istanbul. I have argued in Chapter 3 that Burton Y. Berry's epitaphios is Wallachian in origin, but that does not necessarily mean that Berry purchased it in Romania. Berry spent important phases of his career in Turkey, Romania, Greece, and other places, and I have been unable to determine where Berry purchased the epitaphios in the Indiana University Art Museum.

In a letter to Dumbarton Oaks in 1968, Berry recorded that the epitaphios cost him \$2,500.¹⁰⁷ Even, or especially, considering inflation and the relative value of British and American currencies in 1925 and 1968, Berry paid much more for his epitaphios than Borough paid for the epitaphios from Nicaea. Even in 1925, £22 was a lesser sum than the \$2,500 that Berry reported having paid in 1968.¹⁰⁸ Berry was an experienced collector

¹⁰⁷ Berry, "Burton Yost Berry Papers," letter to Dumbarton Oaks dated November 11, 1968.

¹⁰⁸ That is, Berry reported in 1968 having paid \$2,500. The date of the purchase is unknown. We can deduce only that the amount was paid sometime before November 11, 1968, but it could have been paid days or decades earlier. My comparison of the value of the two purchases is based on information derived from the "Measuring Worth" Web site. Precise comparison is impossible, especially given the very different historical circumstances of Istanbul in 1925 compared to Istanbul in 1968, as well as the different occupations of Borough and Berry, and the fact that we do not know exactly when Berry made his purchase, but the relative value of £22 in 1925 compared to \$2,500 in 1968 means that Burton Y. Berry paid considerably more than R. F. Borough paid. Lawrence H. Officer, "Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1830 to Present," MeasuringWorth, 2008, <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>;

and haggler, while R. F. Borough's disgust at the whole notion of bargaining is made explicit in his narrative. Ironically, Borough probably got the better deal, if we consider what the object meant to Borough compared to what the Bloomington Epitaphios meant to Berry. Any comparison of the relative worth of the two epitaphioi, Borough's and Berry's, must depend only on the amounts the two were willing to pay, but we also have to consider the means at their disposal and the circumstances under which the purchases were made.

It is clear from his letter to Dumbarton Oaks that Berry did not really know what he had purchased.¹⁰⁹ We must assume that the object described by Berry is the same object as the one currently in the collection of the Indiana University Art Museum because there is no record of Berry's having purchased any other epitaphios. Although the inscription is actually in Church Slavonic written in Cyrillic characters, other aspects of Berry's description match the Bloomington Epitaphios. R. F. Borough, an inexperienced collector, took up the challenge of acquiring the epitaphios from Nicaea out of a sense of duty. Berry, the experienced and more enthusiastic collector, simply paid more for a fine post-Byzantine textile without understanding even the object's liturgical significance. The difference between how the two men approached collecting has much to do with their occupations and nationalities. One was an English clergyman, the other an American diplomat. One valued the object he purchased as an emblem of Christianity to be ransomed. The other collector valued his textile as a rare object, and

Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Computing 'Real Value' over Time with a Conversion between U.K. Pounds and U.S. Dollars, 1830–2007," *MeasuringWorth*, 2008, <http://www.measuringworth.com/exchange/>; Samuel H. Williamson, "Six Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to Present," *MeasuringWorth*, 2008, <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>.

¹⁰⁹ Berry, "Burton Yost Berry Papers."

willingly paid much more for it. Berry, however, was the more affluent man, and Borough undertook his task—and surrendered the extra two pound ten—because he “felt it ought to be done.”

This raises another interesting point about Borough’s article. It is an excellent example of the attitude of certain Western Europeans toward the Islamic Near East. Had Edward Said not written his famous study of *Orientalism*, it would be necessary only to read an article like R. F. Borough’s to understand Said’s motive for writing such a book. Said’s thesis is relevant because R. F. Borough was the sort of Briton who made a career of the East. “The East is a career,” an aphorism expressed by Benjamin Disraeli, is one of the ideas that Said used as a springboard for his argument in *Orientalism*.¹¹⁰ This is not to suggest that Borough was passionate about the Orient in the way Disraeli meant. For Borough, however, the Orient was just as much a “constellation of ideas,” as Said put it, as it was for others who committed themselves to careers in the Orient, even if Borough did not actually like the Orient; and Borough’s description of his adventures is surely an example of Orientalism as a “position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own.”¹¹¹

The self-portrait in Borough’s narrative of his journey to Nicaea is almost a stereotype of an English clergyman. “A Recent Visit to Nicaea” is, on the whole, a more overt display of distaste for the Orient than we find in most of the texts that Edward Said cited in his book. Borough’s narrative does not paint a picture of an appealingly exotic Orient to be explored, exploited, and managed. Borough depicted the Orient, rather, as unappealingly exotic, a place to be avoided. While anyone who has traveled extensively

¹¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5, 328.

can certainly sympathize with Borough's plight, including the lax standards of hygiene and uncomfortable modes of transportation that he described having encountered on his journey to Nicaea, Borough clearly assumed that he would in fact encounter such conditions when he ventured anywhere east of Constantinople. These conditions were even worse, as Borough helpfully described them, than a traveler might expect to endure in France.¹¹²

The epitaphios that Borough bought at Nicaea is, perhaps ironically, the least interesting aspect of the article. The article alerts us to the existence in 1925 of an epitaphios that had been in the Church of Our Lady at Nicaea. It would be impossible to say much about the textile that motivated his visit to Nicaea based on Borough's description. Borough tells us that the background silk was crimson, the embroidery mostly in silver. He also wrote, "it has been suggested that it is Cretan workmanship."¹¹³ This last point is actually unhelpful. Who suggested this? What aspect is Cretan? Is it Cretan because it is like contemporary Cretan embroidery? Is it Cretan because it resembles some other extant or once extant embroidery? Is it Cretan because the figural style is similar to Cretan wall paintings of the same subject? What exactly was the subject? Borough refers to the epitaphios as an "embroidered representation of Christ in the Tomb."¹¹⁴ Burton Y. Berry similarly described the Bloomington Epitaphios as "showing the placing of Christ in the Tomb."¹¹⁵ As we have seen, such descriptions could

¹¹² Borough, "A Recent Visit to Nicaea," 67.

¹¹³ Ibid.: 70.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.: 66.

¹¹⁵ Berry, "Burton Yost Berry Papers," letter to Dumbarton Oaks dated November 11, 1968.

refer to the iconography of Christ as Amnos, the Epitaphios Threnos, or the Entombment, and even the Deposition.

Since Borough's description of the epitaphios he bought at Nicaea is unhelpful, it is fortunate that the epitaphios that Borough bought at Nicaea has been preserved in the collection of Canterbury Cathedral (figures 137–138). The most important piece of information in Borough's article regarding the textile itself is the inscription, which translates literally as "Demetrios the worshipper, Atalia the worshipper, apostles, Remember, O Lord." A more elegant translation would be "Remember, O Lord, the apostles Demetrios and Atalia who worship you." This is a variant of the type of memorial dedication found on several extant examples. The form refers to the commemorations associated that interrupt the Cherubikon during the Great Entrance. The inscription would seem to be a good reason to associate this textile with the Great Entrance rather than Holy Saturday. However, the iconography and form of this textile suggest that it would indeed have been used as an epitaphios. As discussed in Chapter 3, this epitaphios might be attributed to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Without a close analysis, in which it would have to be compared to similar examples, all we can do is guess about the date.

The Orient was perhaps not to Borough's taste, unless we think of Borough as a curmudgeon who assumed his readers would enjoy his regaling them with a tale of the miserable conditions the hero of the tale encountered on his way to Nicaea, but Borough was committed to his role in Constantinople. An implicit subject of "A Recent Visit to Nicaea" is Orthodox Christianity, a "relic" of which Borough set out to retrieve. He thus broke his vow never to "go farther east than Constantinople, which I felt was my limit of

endurance as to filth, discomfort, and general barbarity....”¹¹⁶ To retrieve the epitaphios was, as Borough saw it, his duty as a Christian. It was not the first time that Borough was asked to act on behalf of Eastern Christians. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate asked Borough in 1921 to approach the Anglican Church about the possible terms of intercommunion for Syrian Orthodox Christians living in Britain and the United States.¹¹⁷ In that case, Borough acted in the role go-between for the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England. In the case of the adventure described in “A Recent Trip to Nicaea,” Borough acted on behalf of a “more youthful and venturesome” friend, but the goal was to rescue a “relic” of the Christian East.¹¹⁸

Borough reminds his reader that the textile in question is from Nicaea, and the year 1925 was the sixteen-hundredth anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. On completing the transaction in which he paid for the epitaphios, Borough described the textile as a “treasure wrapped up in newspaper and delivered into Christian hands on Lady Day, 1925, having been the property of Our Lady’s Church until the Greek evacuation.” For Borough, then, the epitaphios was a reminder of both the Council of Nicaea and the Greek evacuation. It is perhaps not going too far to suggest that Borough presents the textile in his story as a hostage to be ransomed. The original patron might only have intended to commemorate Demetrios and Atalia as Orthodox Christians. Borough’s narrative made this epitaphios into an emblem of Christian identity, for Borough himself, for Greek refugees, and for Nicaea.

¹¹⁶ Borough, “A Recent Visit to Nicaea,” 66.

¹¹⁷ William Henry Taylor, *Antioch and Canterbury: The Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of England 1874–1928* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 111–13.

¹¹⁸ Borough, “A Recent Visit to Nicaea,” 66.

Conclusions:

In this study, I have focused on questions of when and why aëres and epitaphioi developed and of how they were used. The aër and the epitaphios are distinct types of liturgical textiles with different functions. It has usually been assumed that the epitaphios developed from the aër. I have tried to demonstrate, however, that we cannot conclude that the distinction between the two types was always as clear as it is now or even that we can determine when that distinction became clear. In Chapter 1, I discussed how the terms used by modern scholars might affect how we think about the functions of these liturgical textiles. I believe that reasoning backward from modern practice has led to mistaken conclusions about the development of the aër and the epitaphios. Although the epitaphios clearly became a distinct type of liturgical textile from the aër, we cannot rely upon texts or the textiles themselves for evidence in determining when the differentiation between aëres and epitaphioi actually took place. The terms in liturgical sources, monastic typika, and inventories were not used in the same way or as consistently as they are modern practice.

In Chapter 2, I discussed aëres and epitaphioi as expressions of theological ideas relating to orthodoxy and the liturgy. I have also considered how the development of the epitaphios might have been a response to popular piety and folk traditions of lament. Iconography is not our best clue for determining when aëres and epitaphioi became distinct types of textiles. Iconography can, however, confirm that aëres and epitaphioi were expressions of the theology behind the rites in which those textiles were used. Iconography on aëres and epitaphioi developed with changes in the liturgy. Although the Great Entrance is an older rite than the Holy Saturday burial procession, the development

of the Holy Saturday liturgy had an effect on changes in the Great Entrance.¹ In the same way, the function of the aër predates the use of the epitaphios on Holy Saturday, but the development of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography on the epitaphios in turn affected the iconography on aëres. Some of the textiles listed in Part II were probably intended for use as epitaphioi, but nothing about their iconography or inscriptions disqualified them for use as aëres. It seems that there was a period during which a textile that we now refer to as either an aër or an epitaphios might actually have been used for both purposes. I cannot prove that any textile was used as both an aër and an epitaphios, but we cannot use the iconography or inscriptions on textiles to determine whether a textile was intended to be used only as one type or the other.

Regional tendencies in iconography were the subject of the first part of Chapter 3. The iconography on aëres and epitaphioi certainly varied from one place to another, but it always expressed an Orthodox Christian interpretation of the meaning of the liturgy. Variations in style and iconography can be so characteristic of a particular time and place that we might use style and iconography as evidence in making an attribution. In recent years, scholars have also pursued the question of whether we can use the evidence of style and technique to establish whether a textile can be attributed to a particular workshop. As I have explained in Chapter 3, I am skeptical about such arguments. Embroidery techniques ought to be studied, on all types of Byzantine and post-Byzantine textiles, but we have to be careful about the kinds of arguments in which such evidence is adduced. Technique could be a useful test of art historical methods that use style and iconography as evidence.

¹ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 46, 226.

Finally, I have attempted to argue in Chapter 4 that aëres and epitaphioi were important sites for the display of the Orthodox identity of the patrons. While I established in Chapter 2 that the iconography on aëres and epitaphioi was an expression of Orthodox Christian theology, I have suggested in Chapter 4 that a name embroidered on an aër or epitaphios identified the person named as an Orthodox Christian. Arguing from the evidence of iconography and inscriptions embroidered on aëres and epitaphioi, I have proposed that liturgical textiles also carried messages other than their most obvious theological meanings. I have argued that Nicolae Iorga's idea of Byzantine continuity is still a useful theory for understanding post-Byzantine patrons of liturgical textiles. It seems likely that aëres and epitaphioi were types of liturgical textiles that had a particularly strong significance as an expression of the patron's Orthodox Christian identity. This is due to the meaning of the iconography embroidered on aëres and epitaphioi and to the messages in embroidered inscriptions.

Ștefan cel Mare, the fifteenth-century Moldavian prince, commissioned many types of liturgical textiles. Among the textiles associated with this great patron, the aëres and epitaphioi included the longest inscriptions. Aëres and epitaphioi were displayed to the congregation, and an inscription on an aër also implies that the person named in the inscription would have been commemorated during the Great Entrance. That the inscriptions on aër-epitaphioi associated with Ștefan cel Mare are filled with titles and names suggests an additional significance. As a group, these inscriptions present a formula that is more expansive than the usual commemorative formula presented on aëres and epitaphioi. Ștefan cel Mare seems to have used aëres and epitaphioi as one tool in a

fifteenth-century public relations campaign targeting the clergy and the nobility of Moldavia.

While I have focused on two types of liturgical textiles, I have also had to consider the significance of other types of textiles. To study the *aër* and the *epitaphios* in isolation from other liturgical textiles affects how we interpret them. We might give them too much importance or misinterpret what they mean if we do not survey the whole range of textiles used in the performance of the liturgy. I have tried to bear this in mind, and it has become clear that the relative scarcity of scholarly works about Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles remains a problem. I have pursued my research in a number of directions, but I have not exhausted the possible approaches that a scholar might take in the study of Byzantine textiles in general or even *aëres* and *epitaphioi* specifically. Although I have discussed some possible implications of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* as gifts to monasteries and churches, I have not pursued the question of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* as diplomatic gifts between nations. More work needs to be done to understand how textiles were used as gifts during the Palaiologan and post-Byzantine periods. I have also not examined the development of the *Epitaphios Threnos* iconography on painted portable icons. The question of why this iconography came to be used on icons ought to be explored. An exhaustive study of the development of this iconography on portable icons compared to the development of the same iconography on textiles could be a fruitful area of research.

There are other avenues of research that might be pursued in the study of liturgical textiles generally. A systematic philological analysis of terms relating to liturgical textiles combined with a thorough analysis of the place of textiles in the history

of the liturgy could produce a welcome corrective to the mistakes that I and other scholars might have made. Scholars might also consider the significance of silk in the context of the liturgy. Many scholars, beginning with the seminal work of Robert Lopez, have studied the history of silk as a Byzantine commodity.² How did silk, as a characteristically Byzantine commodity, affect the meaning of liturgical textiles? It might also be possible to explore the question of why embroidery became such an important medium during the Palaiologan period. I have touched on the significance of aëres and epitaphioi as textiles in Chapter 2, but these were not the only types of embroidered textiles. Some scholars have considered the place of Byzantine clothing in the history of fashion and in the context of the liturgy.³ The small amount of evidence is the greatest impediment to such research projects, but scarcity of evidence is always a challenge faced by Byzantinists. Anna Muthesius has worked to establish a corpus of Byzantine woven silk.⁴ More work remains to be done to establish a corpus of extant Byzantine embroidered textiles of all types. The catalogue in Part II is a first step toward that goal.

² Robert S. Lopez, "The Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum* 20 (January 1945): 1–42. See also Nicolas Oikonomides, "Commerce et production de la soie à Byzance," in *Hommes et richesses dans l'Empire byzantin*, (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1989), 187–92; and Nicolas Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Production in Byzantium from the Sixth to the Ninth Century: The Seals of the Kommerkiarioi," *DOP* 40, (1986): 33–53.

³ Jennifer Lee Ball, "Byzantine Dress" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001); Woodfin, "Late Byzantine Liturgical Vestments".

⁴ Anna Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving Ad 400 to Ad 1200* (Vienna: Verlag Fassbaender, 1997).

Part II: A Catalogue of the Aëres and Epitaphioi (ca. 1300 to 1506)

Introduction:

The following catalogue is the first part of an attempt to fill a gap in the study of Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles. This catalogue includes forty-nine embroidered aëres and epitaphioi from the period beginning in the early fourteenth century, the period of the earliest extant example, and ending in 1506, the period of the last example associated with Ștefan cel Mare, one of the greatest patrons of liturgical textiles. In his 1995 essay on the subject of epitaphioi in the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* Demetrios Pallas discussed a period beginning in the early fourteenth century and ending in the early seventeenth century, a slightly longer period than I have covered in the following catalogue.¹ Pallas knew of about seventy examples that could be assigned to a period ending in the early seventeenth century.² Judging by the examples that I have been able to locate for that period, published and unpublished, it seems that this number is quite short of the actual number of extant epitaphioi. All the textiles listed in the following catalogue have been published. I have not been able to discover any unpublished aëres or epitaphioi made before 1506. There are, however, many aëres and epitaphioi made after 1506 that have not been published. I have, for example, found an unpublished example of the sixteenth century that was unknown to Pallas. Even if we consider only the period 1295–1506, the period covered by the following catalogue, Pallas' estimate was still quite short.

Pallas listed thirty-one epitaphioi made before 1506. Pallas was counting only those objects that he considered to be epitaphioi, but the number of objects that can be

¹ Pallas, "Der Epitaphios."

² Ibid., 790.

described as epitaphioi (as opposed to aëres) that are known to have existed and that were made before 1506 is actually about forty-four. Of the examples listed in the following catalogue, Pallas did regard most as fitting the category of epitaphioi. There are a few additional textiles listed in the following catalogue that Pallas might have considered epitaphioi if he had known about them. There are also a few examples in my catalogue that Pallas would have categorized as aëres. If I were to follow the same criteria as Pallas, I would omit catalogue numbers 14, 25, 27, 40, 41, and 43. Those six examples would be better described as aëres, although Pallas counted catalogue number 41 among the epitaphioi he discussed. This means that, for the period before 1506, in this catalogue there are still thirteen textiles of which Pallas was simply unaware but which he might have categorized as epitaphioi: catalogue numbers 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 22, 23, 32, 35, 36, 37, 46, and 47.

Not all of the textiles listed in the following catalogue still exist. It is also impossible to know whether every surviving example has been found. The date range that Pallas chose to discuss, from the end of the thirteenth century to about 1600, contributes to the problem because the distinction between aëres and epitaphioi as types of liturgical textiles was not as clear for the first two hundred years of that period as it became later. The distinction is quite clear now, among textiles used in the rites of the Orthodox Christian Church, but to reason backwards from modern practice, to attempt to argue about how objects would have been used during the fourteenth century based on how similar objects are used today, only confuses the attempt to understand how the aër and the epitaphios developed over time. I have chosen to limit the following catalogue to those aëres or epitaphioi made during the period 1295 to 1506, the period during which

the epitaphios first became distinct from the aër. During that period, then, it is difficult to determine whether certain examples were epitaphioi or aëres. The first purpose of this introduction is to outline in general the kinds of decisions I made about what to include and what not to include in the following catalogue. More specific discussion of each textile is reserved for the catalogue entries about the examples that can be reasonably questioned. The second purpose of this introduction is to explain how the catalogue is organized.

Of these forty-nine objects listed in this catalogue, forty-five still exist. They are widely scattered in collections in Europe and North America. Of those forty-five extant objects, I have been able to see eighteen in person, or nearly forty percent. For those I have not seen in person, I have had to rely on photographs and published descriptions. In only two cases have I been unable to locate published photographs, the Aër-Epitaphios of Mikhail Andreevich and an aër from the Putna Monastery (catalogue numbers 36 and 40). The examples I have been able to see in person are 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 21, 28, 29, 33, 41, 42, 44, 45, and 49. I have indicated when and where I saw these examples in the essay for each one. These are not the only aëres and epitaphioi I have seen in person. Apart from a number of examples in scattered museum collections and monastery treasuries, I was also able to examine in Athens during the summer of 2005 almost all the aëres, epitaphioi, and kalymmata in storage at the Benaki Museum. All the embroidered aëres and epitaphioi in the Benaki Museum were made after the period covered by this catalogue, but I have mentioned a few of them in Part I.

I have also examined all the antimensia in the Byzantine and Christian Museum. All antimensia at the Byzantine and Christian Museum, and indeed all antimensia printed

with the Epitaphios Threnos iconography, date from the seventeenth century or later. I have discussed antimensia only briefly in Part I (in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2), but they have been the subject of much scholarly attention, at least among liturgiologists and clergy who actually use them, because of their special theological significance.³ Art historians have, unfortunately, shown much less interest in antimensia than they have in other types of liturgical textiles. Several interesting examples are, however, listed in exhibition catalogues.⁴

I have tried to resist the urge to draw a distinction in this catalogue between the aër and the epitaphios because I believe that this distinction developed during or after the period discussed. An object we think of as an epitaphios in the modern sense might also have been used as an aër. Part of the reason I have written this study is to make that very point. There are a few exceptions, as I have indicated in the catalogue entry for those examples. The distinction between an aër and an epitaphios becomes clearer, for historians of Orthodox Christian liturgical textiles, among objects made during the first half of the sixteenth century. That is one of the three main reasons for limiting this catalogue to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The second reason for limiting this catalogue to aëres and epitaphioi made before 1506 is the development of the iconography, which is discussed fully in Part I (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). By the end of

³ Christy, “The Antimension Its History, Practice and Theology”; Izzo, *The Antimension*; Kasinec, Struminsky, and Izzo, *Byzantine-Ruthenian Antimensia*; Lübeck, “Das Antimension der Griechen.”; Euangelos K Mantzouneas, *He ennoia ton antimension ek kanonikes apopseos* (Athens, 1980); Petrides, “L’antimension.”; Raes, “Antimension, Tablit, Tabot.”

⁴ See, for example, Athanasios A. Karakatsanes and Basile Atsalos, eds., *Thesouroi tou Agiou Orous* (Thessaloniki: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, 1997), 490–501.

the fifteenth century, the full iconography of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos began to appear on embroidered textiles, whether aëres or epitaphioi.

It is not a coincidence that the end of this catalogue also coincides with the end of the reign of Ștefan cel Mare (Stephan the Great) of Moldavia. This brings us to the third reason for choosing 1506 as the end date for the period covered by this catalogue. Rather than choose an arbitrary date, I chose to end this catalogue with the last epitaphios commissioned by Ștefan cel Mare. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery (catalogue number 49, figure 80) was completed in 1506. Ștefan cel Mare had died in 1505. Ștefan cel Mare's patronage resulted in the most important contribution to early post-Byzantine liturgical embroidery. Embroidery was certainly not the only type of art that benefited from the patronage of Ștefan cel Mare, but the art of liturgical embroidery reached a zenith in Moldavia during late fifteenth-century. That this important period coincided with the Moldavian apogee under Ștefan cel Mare is part of the subject of Part I, Chapter 4. Liturgical textiles were a useful tool for the display of princely authority and pious patronage. Ștefan cel Mare was not the first patron to take advantage of this, but he was a prolific patron who apparently understood the significance of having his name or even his portrait displayed in church processions.

Although there are forty-nine textiles—either aëres or epitaphioi—listed in this catalogue, there are actually fifty objects listed altogether. One of the objects discussed, the so-called “umbrella” of the Veronica ciborium in the Vatican (catalogue number 16a, figures 32–33), which probably no longer exists, was almost certainly not an aër or an epitaphios, but Demetrios Pallas listed it among the epitaphioi he discussed in his 1995

essay on epitaphioi for the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*.⁵ Another lost object, catalogue number 16b, is recorded in the same source that recorded 16a, but 16b actually was an aër or an epitaphios. Several other examples that I have included possibly do not belong in this catalogue. Since the question of whether something is an aër or an epitaphios or both can be disputed, I have preferred to include too many examples rather than too few. That is why I have included 16a while disputing its identification as either an aër or an epitaphios.

Whether a textile was made before or after 1506 can also be disputed. For each example that I have included in this catalogue, I have explained my decision to assign it to the period before 1506. The Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 48, figure 79), for example, is included among the following aër-epitaphioi only because I cannot disprove that it belongs in this catalogue. Some scholars have argued that this example was made in 1400, but that date is not entirely convincing. Two letters embroidered in the inscription seem to indicate a date, but they give the year as 1400 *Anno Domini*, rather than 6908 or 6909 *Anno Mundi*.⁶ This would have been unusual, if not unprecedented, for that period. The earliest Byzantine use of a date rendered as *Anno Domini*, as far as I am aware, appears in a text dated 1417.⁷ The variant of the iconography used on the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios is also unusual for the period around 1400. I believe nonetheless that the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios was

⁵ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios.”

⁶ Boris Rothemund, *Byzantinische und russische Stickereien* (Munich: Slavisches Institut, 1961), 16; Boris Rothemund et al., *Katalog des Ikonenmuseums Schloss Autenried* (Munich: Slavischen Institut, 1974), 20–22; Elizabeth Trenkle, *Liturgische Geräte und Gewänder der Ostkirche* (Munich: Slavic Institute, 1962).

⁷ S. Lambros, “Das Testament des Neilos Damilas,” *BZ* 4 (1895): 585, note 1.

probably, or at least possibly, a product of the period before the end of the fifteenth century. Again I have chosen to err on the side of exhaustiveness. The question of dating the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios is discussed in detail at catalogue number 48 below. I have explained my reasoning about other examples of uncertain date in the catalogue entries for those textiles.

I have included some textiles that are arguably neither aëres nor epitaphioi. The Aër of Grand Princes Semenovia (catalogue number 14, figure 29), for example, has been described as a wall hanging.⁸ I argue that the Aër of Grand Princes Semenovia and two other textiles (catalogue number 25, figure 46; and catalogue number 43, figure 67) were almost certainly meant to be used as aëres, even though the iconography embroidered on them is not typical of aëres or epitaphioi. In Chapter 3 I have argued that the iconography embroidered on each of these textiles would have been appropriate for an aër. The large size of these three textiles, if they are aëres, would suggest that aëres could be unwieldy objects in procession. Epitaphioi are sometimes assumed to be larger than aëres, but this was not necessarily the case. Pauline Johnstone assumed that the “liturgical epitaphios,” a veil carried in procession during the Great Entrance, was necessarily larger than the “great aër,” which was used to cover the diskos and chalice on the altar.⁹ The large sizes of catalogue numbers 14, 25, and 43 indicate not only that an aër could be very large, but also that the iconography used to decorate aëres was flexible. The distinction between these categories has been overstated in the scholarly literature of the last century. One of the best pieces of evidence that these three textiles were regarded as aëres is the terminology used to refer to them in the embroidered inscriptions around the border.

⁸ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 319, note 1.

⁹ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 26.

Attempts at precision in terminology for modern scholarship might result in distinct categories that did not exist when the objects were made. In Chapter 1 I argued that the use of the terms “aër” and “epitaphios” was different during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These words and the other terms used to describe the types of textiles under discussion can be a source of frustration and confusion. I have attempted to sort through this problem in Chapter 1, but I do not believe the terms can be used as precisely as some scholars have attempted to do. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to most of the objects in the following list as aër-epitaphioi only to indicate that each embroidery I refer to in this way might have been used as either an aër or an epitaphios. There simply is not enough evidence to make a clear distinction in most cases.

As this discussion makes clear, it is very difficult to be precise about the number of surviving Byzantine and post-Byzantine epitaphioi for several reasons. One important factor hindering an accurate census of surviving epitaphioi, as already noted, is the question of which objects to count. Is an object an aër or an epitaphios? This is the first question to be answered in compiling a catalogue, and it is not easy to arrive at a convincing answer. I believe that Demetrios Pallas’ list is flawed because Pallas attempted to list only epitaphioi, so I have chosen to include both epitaphioi and aëres.

There are almost certainly objects that may be regarded as aëres or epitaphioi from before 1506 that I have not included because I do not know about them. Obviously, if I do not know about certain extant examples, I cannot include them. I have, however, seen only one object that I was tempted to include but chose not to include. An aër-epitaphios at Sucevița Monastery in Romania has been mentioned a few times in the

scholarly literature.¹⁰ The textile in question is approximately 49 x 31 cm, which is a size that might be more appropriate for an aër than for an epitaphios. The iconography, however, would have been appropriate for either an aër or an epitaphios. No photograph has ever been published, but I have seen this example in person, and the iconography is a typical variant of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos. It is also embroidered with an inscription around the border, the hymn “Noble Joseph,” which is associated with Good Friday and the Great Entrance, so both the hymn used in the inscription and the iconography would have been appropriate for either an aër or an epitaphios. The inscriptions, unfortunately, do not include the date. The similarity of this embroidery to an epitaphios of 1516 at the Putna monastery (figure 164) suggests that the Sucevița Aër was made during the same period or later. Émile Turdeanu assigned this veil to the era of Ștefan cel Mare.¹¹ When I saw it in 2005 I was not persuaded that the Sucevița Aër was made during the fifteenth century. On iconographic grounds I believe that it was made in the sixteenth century albeit under the influence of examples of the late fifteenth century.

Having chosen which types of object to include, the question of where the objects are now is the next one to consider. The Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3) was missing for most of the twentieth century. When it disappeared it had been at the church of St. Kliment in Ohrid, but it is now in Sophia, Bulgaria. Some that were known and have been published are now missing. I have included four such examples (catalogue numbers 16, 26, 36, and 40). Number 40, as discussed in the essays

¹⁰ Dimitrie Dan, *Mănăstirea Sucevita: Cu anexe de documente ale Suceviței și Schitului celui Mare: Aprobate de Academia Română* (Bucharest: Tipographia Bucovina, 1923), 52; Oreste Tafrali, “Le Monastère de Sucevița et son trésor,” in *Mélanges Charles Diehl, Études sur l’histoire et sur l’art de Byzance* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1930), 211; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 206.

¹¹ Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 206.

for that example and number 41, also proves that publications are not always accurate, another factor that has made it difficult to assemble a catalogue that I can claim is complete. Some objects have even been conflated in the scholarly literature. The Vatican Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 16b, figures 34–35) has been mistaken as recently as 1994 for an aër-epitaphios preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (catalogue number 21, figure 41).¹² It is also possible that there are still some examples that have yet to be discovered. Some might survive in monastery treasuries or in storage in museums. Collectors and their descendants might have medieval embroideries that will remain unknown until their collections are catalogued, published, or sold. Families displaced by a century of war, such as the Balkan Wars of the early twentieth century through the conflicts in the former Yugoslavian states at the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, may have taken objects with them as they moved across borders. The collection of the Benaki museum includes many objects brought from Asia Minor by Greek refugees during the twentieth century. There might still be examples that families kept instead of selling to collectors.

Not surprisingly, more recent textiles survive in greater numbers than older textiles. It is more likely, therefore, that there are undiscovered examples of relatively recent date than there are from the period before 1500. This last point is another reason for choosing the limit of 1506 for the end of this catalogue. Within this range, 1295–1506, it is at least possible that every surviving example of the embroidered epitaphios could be listed in a catalogue such as this one. It is certainly more likely to be complete if we limit this list to early examples than if we were to attempt listing all surviving

¹² David Buckton, ed. *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (London: The British Museum Press, 1994), 212, bibliography.

examples from before 1600. The following catalogue, then, is possibly the complete corpus of known epitaphioi made before 1506. It is at least, and as far as I have been able to determine, the most complete list presented by any scholar so far. All of the examples for this period have been published. Let me be clear: all examples listed in this catalogue have been published. There are, however, many examples made after 1506 that have not been published.

Even the limited number of examples listed in this catalogue has never been listed and described by any single scholar until now. Whether one recognizes the completeness of this catalogue depends on the questions discussed in this introduction so far. There is also the question of how to organize this list. There are three publications that discuss Byzantine and post-Byzantine embroidered aëres and epitaphioi that a reader would be most likely to consult when first researching the subject: Pauline Johnstone's *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*; Gabriel Millet's *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*; and Demetrios Pallas's entry about epitaphioi in the *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*. None of these authors—Gabriel Millet, Pauline Johnstone, and Demetrios Pallas—claimed that their lists were complete, and each took a different approach to organizing the lists they presented. I have chosen to emulate neither Gabriel Millet nor Demetrios Pallas in organizing the following catalogue. Rather, I have preferred a simple chronological arrangement similar to Pauline Johnstone's approach. This is perhaps a minor point, but it is a decision that must be taken with an eye to how the list will be perceived as an analytical tool.

In the *Reallexikon*, Demetrios Pallas pursued a complicated discussion of categories. His categories overlapped and were based not only on iconography but also

took size and inscriptions into account. His approach was a way to illuminate the similarities among groups of examples, but it can also lead to categories that are somewhat artificial or misleading. For example, of the many ways in which he grouped small numbers of examples together, Pallas' identification of several examples that were embroidered with versions of the hymn “Σιγησάτω πάντα σὰρξ βροτεία” (Let all mortal flesh be silent) was probably meant only to call attention to a group of textiles that demonstrate a connection to the liturgical texts of Holy Saturday.¹³ This hymn replaces the Cherubikon during the Holy Saturday Orthros, but it did not become a standard feature of the Holy Saturday Orthros until after the middle of the sixteenth century.¹⁴ The examples that Pallas grouped this way are actually quite different from one another in iconography and style. It is surprising to find this hymn on some of the textiles that Pallas mentioned because of the early dates.

The group that Pallas identified might create a false impression of the importance of the hymn *Σιγησάτω πάντα σὰρξ βροτεία* in the late fourteenth century. That is the period when it first appeared on an epitaphios, the Wallachian Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30). Without knowing that the use of this hymn was unusual in the late fourteenth century, the significance of each instance of the hymn on an embroidered textile could be overlooked. Not only is the iconography of each example a unique variant of the Epitaphios Threnos, the hymn is also embroidered in a slightly different version, at first in Old Church Slavonic and only later appearing in Greek. To group these textiles because they bear some version of this hymn could mislead even a critical reader into assuming that the status of the hymn as a feature of the Holy Saturday

¹³ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 800.

¹⁴ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 76–77.

liturgy was unchanged during this period, or as that the hymn is only one of many features these textiles have in common. This is a type of grouping that a simple chronological arrangement, to the extent that this has been possible, helps us avoid.

Gabriel Millet also grouped the epitaphioi he discussed in his 1947 *Broderies religieuse de Style byzantin* into categories, but he used fewer, more general, categories than Pallas would use.¹⁵ Millet's approach to grouping examples together was simpler, and such an approach can also misdirect our attention to those features that certain examples within a group have in common while distracting us from how these textiles differ or from what examples might have in common across groups. For example, the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66) was probably influenced by the presence in Moldavia of the Serbian Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36). Millet grouped them separately, thus calling attention away from this probable line of influence. Instead, he grouped the late fifteenth-century Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios with the middle fourteenth-century Pantokrator Monastery Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21), and the result is that the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios seems anachronistic, like a revival of an older style. Millet used nine categories to group the epitaphioi he discussed in 1947, and his approach is discussed further in Appendix B.¹⁶ Demetrios Pallas grouped and regrouped the examples he discussed according to numerous criteria. Rather than rehearse all of Pallas' categories I refer the reader to Pallas' entry on the "Epitaphios" in the *Reallexikon*.¹⁷ In critiquing the use of such groupings as those used by Pallas and Millet, it is possible to

¹⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 86–109.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pallas, "Der Epitaphios."

exaggerate the importance they had even for the authors. I present this discussion not primarily as a critique of Pallas and Millet, but only as a way to justify the choices I have made in organizing the following catalogue.

Each example is a unique object, so a simple chronological arrangement has been preferred. There is a danger in this arrangement of creating the impression that each example is a stage in a teleological progression from primitive early examples to complex, fully realized, recent examples. This impression is most definitely not intended even though it may be unavoidable. The chronological arrangement is only a convenient alternative to the complex groupings favored by Millet and Pallas. A geographical arrangement was also possible, but this too would present problems. Where an object is now might not be the place where it was made or meant initially to be, and identifying an object's original location is impossible in some cases. There are also examples in which the iconographic and stylistic tendencies in one part of the Orthodox Christian world seem to have affected another regional tradition. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) is the best example of this: a Serbian embroidery that seems profoundly to have affected the Moldavian tradition. I have discussed the question of national "schools" or regional tendencies in Chapter 3 of Part I. Categories arranged by type, style or geography can be useful, however, for understanding the development within regions and over time, as long as such an approach is taken with caution. The Tables in Appendix B are meant to illustrate both the usefulness and the limitations of such categories.

For the reasons just outlined, I have chosen to simplify the arrangement of this catalogue as much as possible. To the extent that it has been possible I have organized the

following list of aères and epitaphioi by date. When dating is difficult I have resorted to grouping like objects together according to patron, geography, iconography, or style. Catalogue numbers 30 and 31, for example, are so similar that they might be products of the same workshop. The date of one is known. The date of the other is not. I have chosen to place them together in this list, with the securely dated example first, because to separate them would be even more arbitrary. In such cases I cannot be entirely certain whether the chronological arrangement is accurate. This chronological arrangement, then, should be taken as merely the most convenient approach, and it is a chronology mitigated by decisions regarding the patron, geography, iconography, or style. It should not be understood as a way to discern a pattern of chronological development.

Each example is unique. For this reason, the handling of each essay is unique. I have chosen not to adopt an artificially regular format for describing the textiles listed here. At the beginning of each entry I provide a title, dimensions, a date, and the present location (if known). After that, each essay is handled in a way that best suits the textile under discussion. All inscriptions are transcribed and translated. After each essay I have provided a list of references.

Catalogue:

1. (Figures 1–4)

Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos. From the Church of Saint Kliment, Ohrid.¹⁸
117 x 197 cm. The attached aër (now removed) visible in early photographs measures 43
x 51 cm.¹⁹

1312–1328.

National History Museum, Sofia, Bulgaria (29231).

The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos might be the oldest surviving Byzantine embroidered aër-epitaphios. It is now in the collection of the National History Museum, Sofia, Bulgaria. Its iconography associates this aër-epitaphios with a small group of examples, Millet's group 1b, in which the figure of Christ is presented in profile, laid on the tomb, with a pair of angels holding rhipidia and flanking Christ.²⁰ Above the figure of Christ are the abbreviations ΙΣ ΧΣ. The abbreviation ΑΓΓΕ ΚΥ (Angel of the Lord) appears twice, once each over the two angels. The three other examples with which Millet links the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios are the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11, figure 24), the Venice Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 12, figure 25), and the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes (catalogue number 21, figure 41). The basic pattern of iconography in these examples and shared motifs in the ornament, such as the crosses in circles and the vine motif in the borders, help to account for why Millet grouped these four together. The aër-epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos, like the others in Millet's group 1b, includes the evangelists in the four corners. The three extant evangelists in this case are represented by their symbols and identified with inscriptions,

¹⁸ I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

¹⁹ Measurements tend to vary from one publication to the next. Unless otherwise noted, measurements in this catalog are from the most recent publication in which measurements are provided. Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 28.

²⁰ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89–94.

Matthew (MATΘAIOΣ) in the upper left, John (ΙΩ) in the upper right, and Luke (ΛΟΥΚΑΣ) in the lower right. Mark is missing, the lower left corner having been damaged and replaced with a kalymma. The repair might be significant as evidence that two types of object, aër and epitaphios, were regarded as having overlapping, if not identical, functions. Without knowing when the repair was made we cannot use this evidence to draw any conclusions about the development the aër into the epitaphios.

Although badly worn, the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios was clearly a work of high quality. The whole background is red silk. The designs and figures are embroidered with silver, gold, and silk thread. Some of the detail has been lost, especially areas embroidered with silk thread, but the purple silk in the head of the eagle (John) in the upper right corner is well preserved. Some of the beige silk used for the body of Christ and the faces of the angels remains. Other small details of colored silk, such as the red and green circles that represent colored jewels on the gospel book covers, also survive. The Andronikos aër gives the impression of a limited palette of colors that emphasizes the dazzling use of gold and silver to execute the more elaborate design motifs. The kalymma used to repair the lower left corner was removed after 1988, during the course of restoration at the National History Museum in Sofia, as Chief Curator Ivan Petrinski explained in his catalogue entry for the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*.²¹ The aër is still in the collection of the National History museum, and it is clearly visible in photographs from the early twentieth century, such as those reproduced by Kondakov and Milukov and Mirković.²² Figure 1 shows the photograph

²¹ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 314–15.

²² Kondakov, *Makedonija*, plate 4; P. N. Miliukov, *Khristianskii drevnosti zapadnoi Makedonii*, vol. 4, part 1, *Izvestiia Russkago arkheologicheskago instituta v*

taken by Milukov; figure 2 shows a stage in the restoration after the removal of the kalymma; figure 3 shows the object mounted on a red cloth as it was displayed for the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* in New York in 2004; and figure 4 shows the kalymma that had been used to repair the lower left corner.

An inscription runs in two lines across the “altar” under the body of Christ:

+MEMNHΣΟ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ ΒΟΥΛΓΑΡΩΝ ΕΝ ΘΥΣΙΑΙΣ: / ΑΝΑΚΤΟΣ
ΑΝΔΡΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΛΟΓΟΥ:

The inscription translated literally reads “Remember, Shepherd of the Bulgarians, during the sacrifice, the ruler Andronikos Palaiologos;” or, in a less literal translation, “Shepherd of the Bulgarians, remember the ruler Andronikos Palaiologos during the ceremony.” The Andronikos in question is probably Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328), a conclusion based on the close relationship of Andronikos II to the archbishops of Ohrid, especially Archbishop Gregory.²³ The language is also archaizing, with the word ἀνακτος (ruler) standing out as the kind of classical loanword favored by scholars such as Theodore Metochites during the reign of Andronikos II.²⁴ The “sacrifice” or ceremony in question is probably the Great Entrance.

Andronikos III could also be the Andronikos named in the inscription, but the identification of the object with Andronikos II is more convincing because it was during this period, in 1294/5, that the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos was built by Progonos

Konstantinopolie (Sofia: Durzhavna pechatnitsa, 1899), plate 30; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, plate 178; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, plate 11, number 2.

²³ Ševčenko and Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” 10–11; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 315.

²⁴ Ševčenko and Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” 3; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 315.

Sgouros, the *megas hetaireirarches* and the father-in-law (γαμβρός) of Andronikos II.²⁵ A fresco painting records the patronage and date (6803 or 1294/5) over the entrance to the Church now known as St. Kliment.²⁶ The Church of St. Kliment was the last known location of this epitaphios before the wars of 1912–1918. If the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios was made for St. Kliment, then the embroidery probably dates to around the same time, 1294/5, and perhaps it was presented as a gift for the dedication of the church. However, Ivan Petrinski, following Juliana Boycheva, associates this embroidery with the Cathedral of Ohrid, St. Sofia, speculating that the transfer to the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos took place after the Cathedral became a mosque.²⁷ This is just as plausible, if not more so, because the Cathedral was renovated during the time of the Archbishop Gregory (1313–1328), which we know because an inscription in the exonarthex is dated 1313/14.²⁸ The dedication of a new or restored exonarthex might have been an appropriate occasion for a gift such as the epitaphios on Andronikos, but this would not have been the only reason Andronikos II might have to send a gift to the “Shepherd of the Bulgarians,” even, or especially during the civil war of 1321–1328 when Gregory sided

²⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89; Miliukov, *Khristianskii drevnosti zapadnoi Makedonii*, 90, note 2.

²⁶ Jordan Ivanov, *Bŭlgarski starini iz Makedoniia*, 2nd ed. (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1970. Original publication 1931), 38, no. 8; Ivan Snegarov, *Istoriia na Okhridskata Arkhiepiskopiia*, 2 vols. (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo, 1995. Original publication 1924–1932), 160, note 4.

²⁷ Juliana Boycheva, “Plashtanitsa ot Ohrid v Nacionalnia Istoritseski Muzej, Sophia v konteksta na vizantijeskata vezba ot XIV–XV vek,” in *Medieval Christian Europe: East and West. Tradition, Values, Communications*, ed. Vassil Gjuzelev and Anisava Miltenova (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2002), 693; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 314.

²⁸ Ševčenko and Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” 8.

with Andronikos II.²⁹ Archbishop Gregory is very likely the “Shepherd of the Bulgarians” whom the inscription addresses.

Ivan Petrinski also describes the damage to the lower left corner of the epitaphios (Mark) as a burn, and he suggests that this is further evidence of the original association with the Cathedral because burns can be found on other objects moved from the Cathedral to St. Kliment.³⁰ Burns, however, might not be the most compelling evidence when we consider that all such objects would be used in close proximity to lighted candles. It is, however, reasonable to argue that the Cathedral was the more likely destination for a gift of such luxury. Either possibility, the Cathedral of Saint Sofia or the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, indicates that the Andronikos in question is Andronikos II, which means that this epitaphios could have been made as early as 1294 or as late as 1328. Ihor Ševčenko, and Jeffery Featherstone suggest the date of 1312, the year that Gregory became Archbishop of Ohrid, as the *terminus post quem* for the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios.³¹ Any date during the reign of Andronikos II is possible, but a later date is perhaps more likely, especially if we were to associate this example with the secondary stage of development in the iconography of embroidered aër-epitaphioi. A first stage in that development might be seen in the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figure 5) and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8), but it is just as likely that the two types developed separately and during the same period. That leaves us with a date range of 1312–1328 for the Ohrid Aër-

²⁹ Ibid.: 10–11.

³⁰ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 315.

³¹ Ševčenko and Featherstone, “Two Poems by Theodore Metochites,” 11.

Epitaphios, from the time when Gregory became archbishop of Ohrid to the end of the reign of Andronikos II.

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2. (Figures 5–7)

Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. From the Velika Remeta Monastery, Fruška Gora, Serbia.³²

72 x 143.5 cm, or 132 x 210 cm with the border.

Ca. 1321 (The velvet border was added in the sixteenth century, according to Slobodan Mileusnić.³³)

Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade (4660).

One of the oldest surviving embroidered aër-epitaphioi, the Aër-Epitaphios of Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321) is notable for its simple iconography. The figure of Christ is shown frontally, a cruciform nimbus behind his head, his hands folded over a kalymma decorated with a cross. The kalymma covers Christ's body from his navel to his knees. Above the head of Christ are the abbreviations ΙΣ and ΧΣ embroidered within circles in gold thread. Two columns of angels flank the figure of Christ, a pair of seraphim at the top with six cherubim below them. Stars and crosses in circles, and other decorative motifs in silver and gold thread complete the composition. The Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš shares this iconography with only one other example, the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 7). Now in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade, the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš is from the Velika Remeta (or Grand Remeta) Monastery at Fruška Gora in Serbia, a group of monasteries on the border with Croatia near the Danube. Slobodan Ćurčić follows Svetislav Mandić in attributing this work to a Constantinopolitan workshop.³⁴

Like the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš bears an inscription identifying the patron. The inscription is in Church Slavonic: ΠΟΜΑΝΗ ΒΕ ΔΘΙΑ ΡΑΒΑ ΒΟΕΓΟ ΜΗΛΘΗΝΑ ΣΡΕΙΙΗ (Remember, O God, the soul of your

³² I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

³³ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 315.

³⁴ Ćurčić, "Epitaphios," 138; Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 71–74.

servant Milutin Uroš). This formula is similar to the inscription on the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), but it is even closer to the Greek inscription on the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8). Svetislav Mandić argued that this formula was used when the person named was already dead.³⁵ Mandić took the argument further to suggest that the function of this object was not like that of the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II, which was meant to be carried in the Great Entrance. Slobodan Ćurčić, following Mandić, has argued that the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš was meant to decorate the tomb of the Stefan Uroš II Milutin.³⁶ That would mean that it was made after the death of Milutin Uroš in 1321. However, the question of function is more complicated, and the use of this object as an aër-epitaphios cannot be ruled out even if it were meant also to be used as a cover for the tomb of Milutin Uroš. The Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš may simply represent an early stage in the development of the iconography and function of the aër-epitaphios as a type of liturgical object. That means that we cannot rule out any date during the reign of Milutin Uroš (1282–1321) or even later.

Largely because of its resemblance to the Milutin Uroš epitaphios, the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios should be dated to the same early period, circa 1300, and these two examples, although they are both early, might be considered as a separate category from the rest, a funerary type rather than an early type. Millet grouped the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš with the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19) and the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios of Pope Anastasius (catalogue number 42, figure

³⁵ Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 65–80.

³⁶ Ibid., 71–72; Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine Loca Sancta?,” 252.

66).³⁷ Stojanović also compared the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš to Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios.³⁸ There are, however, some important differences among this group, and the differences might have less to do with chronology than with geography or function. There is another possible explanation for this rare version of the iconography. It has been argued that the frontally posed Christ is meant to imitate a Constantinopolitan relic sometimes identified with the Shroud of Turin.³⁹

The composition and the inscription on the Milutin Uroš epitaphios suggest that we are meant to see the image vertically, with the feet of Christ pointing down. The image of Christ is also a completely frontal view, while the other examples in Millet's group 1a show Christ in an awkward profile pose with the composition arranged so that the image is better viewed horizontally. While the similarity to the Turin Shroud is one of the striking aspects of the iconography on both the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios, the relic almost certainly postdates both embroidered examples. Even if we cannot convincingly argue that the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš is actually the source for both the relic and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios, the iconography is rare enough for us to conclude that there is a connection among them, possibly a common source. The similarities between the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios might tempt us to agree with Slobodan Ćurčić that they are the

³⁷ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*.

³⁸ Dobrila Stojanović, "Vez," in *Istorija primenjene umetnosti kod Srba*, ed. Bojana Radojković (Belgrade: Muzej primenjene umetnosti, 1977), 324.

³⁹ Such relics, images not made by human hands (*acheiropoietai*), and the scholars who have attempted to link them to aëres and epitaphioi are discussed in Appendix A.

products of one workshop.⁴⁰ It is possible, however, that more than one workshop active during the early fourteenth century could produce similar textiles.

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⁴⁰ Ćurčić, “Epitaphios,” 138.

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3. (Figures 8 and 9)

The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos.

86 x 149 cm.

Ca. 1300–1330.

The Art Museum of Princeton University (66-218).

The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos at Princeton University is one of only two extant examples of a type of iconography that closely resembles the image on the Shroud of Turin.⁴¹ In its iconography and composition, the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios is nearly identical to the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš (catalogue number 2, figure 5). It is this similarity that suggests the early date of circa 1300–1330. The iconography is almost the same as the image on the Milutin Uroš Aër-Epitaphios except that the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios lacks the cross-in-circle motif, and the arrangement of the decorative motifs is much more regular on the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios. This embroidery has apparently undergone significant changes as a result of conservation attempts, and the probably high original quality has deteriorated. The body of the figure of Christ is quite crudely executed compared to the face or the gold embroidery of the halo. The angels are of high quality compared to the body of Christ.

The Greek inscription is now somewhat garbled, which suggested to Slobodan Ćurčić that the alteration was executed by someone who did not speak Greek.⁴² In its current state the inscription appears to be a jumble of Greek words and abbreviations: MIXAHΛTOYKYPIPIANOYΨYXHNTOYΔΛΟΥΣΟYMNHΣΘHTIKETHN. Ćurčić deciphered this inscription as: [+] MNHΣΘHTI KE THN ΨYXHN TOY Δ[OY]ΛOY ΣOY MIXAHΛ[OY] TOY KYPIPIANOY (“Remember, O Lord, the soul of thy servant

⁴¹ See Appendix A for a discussion of the relevance, or irrelevance, of the Turin Shroud.

⁴² Ćurčić, “Epitaphios,” 137.

Michael, the son of Kyprianos”).⁴³ Svetislav Mandić argued that this formula was used when the person named was already dead.⁴⁴ The formula asking the Lord to remember the person named is actually somewhat different from the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos, which asks the Archbishop (“Shepherd of the Bulgarians”) rather than the Lord to remember the person named. Both formulae probably refer to Cherubikon sung during the Great Entrance, which would be interrupted to commemorate individuals.

Extending Mandić’s argument, Slobodan Ćurčić concluded that these two examples, the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios and the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, represent a type of embroidered cloth that was made for a church containing the tomb of the person commemorated in the inscription.⁴⁵ That would mean that these two examples are not actually, or only, aër-epitaphioi, but a separate category of object with possibly more than one intended function. Ćurčić further argues that the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios was meant as a kind of *loca sancta* displayed in the church throughout the year rather than only during Holy Week.⁴⁶ While this suggestion is plausible, Ćurčić’s argument is not conclusive, or even necessary, and I have argued in Chapter 2 that the function of such objects was in general more flexible in the fourteenth century than is the case in modern liturgical practice.

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⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 65–80.

⁴⁵ Ćurčić, “Late Byzantine Loca Sancta?,” 252–53.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 260–61.

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4. (Figures 10–15)

The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.⁴⁷

200 x 72 cm. The center panel is 79 x 48 cm.

Ca. 1300.

Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, Greece (Boφ 57).

Among the oldest extant embroidered aër-epitaphioi, the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios has become the most famous and the most frequently published example of Byzantine liturgical embroidery. N. P. Kondakov first published it in 1902 after he discovered it at the Post-Byzantine Church of the Panagia of Panagouda in Thessaloniki in 1900.⁴⁸ Sometime between 1912 and 1920 the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios was taken to Athens.⁴⁹ The Church of the Panagia Panagouda temporarily fell out of use after the liberation of Thessaloniki in 1912, and the epitaphios was in Athens by 1920 when Gabriel Millet saw it at the Academy Museum.⁵⁰ It remained in Athens until 1994 when it was returned to Thessaloniki where it is now in the collection of the Museum of Byzantine Culture.⁵¹

This aër-epitaphios challenges our understanding of this type of liturgical object, its development and its uses. It is a unique hybrid of the kalymma and the aër. Although the Ohrid epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3) was repaired with a kalymma, the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios was designed as a combination of two separate types of textiles. The central panel corresponds to the dimensions and the type of iconography

⁴⁷ I saw this textile in April 2004 in New York where it was part of the exhibit *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁴⁸ Kondakov, *Makedonija*, 138–42, figures 81–84; Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 266, 81.

⁴⁹ Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 211; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 94.

⁵⁰ Oreste Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1913), 184; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 94.

⁵¹ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 312; Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189.

usually associated with the aër, and the two end panels correspond to the dimensions and iconography associated with poterokalymmata (left panel, figure 11) and diskokalymmata (right panel, figure 12). This unique design suggests something about the intended function of the object. It was possibly intended simply as two kalymmata connected by the aër, a single object to be carried over both the diskos and chalice during the great entrance. In that case, the central panel, rather than being carried separately in the procession, would have been carried between the diskos and the chalice. It is unlikely, simply because it would have been impractical, that this textile would have been carried in procession over both the diskos and the chalice. It is more likely that the kalymmata on either end simply reinforce the liturgical meaning of the aër. Then this is not an epitaphios at all but an aër and two kalymmata arranged in an embroidered triptych. The design does not necessarily mean that this textile could not also have been used as an epitaphios.

The arrangement of this embroidery as a composition in three parts is probably its most significant feature for the present study, but the luxury of the materials (the background is embroidered entirely in gold thread so that none of the supporting cloth shows through), the naturalism of the style, and the high quality of the embroidery have attracted the attention of scholars. The quality of the embroidery is such that the image is visible on the reverse of the cloth, although it was probably not meant to be seen as some scholars have suggested.⁵² The Aër-Epitaphios of Thessaloniki, because of its high quality of technique and its naturalistic figural style, has become the focus of theories about Palaiologan embroidery workshops. Everything that can be claimed about the

⁵² Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 175.

existence of such workshops derives from the embroideries themselves, and the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios invites speculation about where such a workshop would have been located (Constantinople or Thessaloniki) and which other objects might be attributed to the same workshop.⁵³ So far, Anna Muthesius has pursued this question along more technical lines than any other scholar, while scholars such as Laskarina Bouras and Sharon Gerstel have considered the question by comparing the figural style to that of artists working in other mediums.⁵⁴ The question of workshops, and the difficulty of attributing any of these embroideries to a particular workshop, is discussed in Chapter 3 of Part I.

Physically the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is quite narrow compared to all other examples. This is because it is a triptych of kalymmata and an aër. The ratio of length to width is nearly 3:1, compared to the ratio of about 2:1 in the case of the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, or 1.7:1 in the case of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios.⁵⁵ The relatively small size is possibly, at least in part, a result of the extreme luxury of the materials: every part of the surface is embroidered with gold, silver, or silk thread. A work of such luxury would have been extremely expensive if it had been made as large as other embroidered aëres of the same period. Taken separately, the central panel of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is quite small compared to other early aër-epitaphioi, only 72 cm wide compared to 117.5 cm in the case of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios. The

⁵³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 119; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 73.

⁵⁴ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*; Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki.”; Gerstel, “The Aesthetics of Orthodox Faith,” 334.

⁵⁵ In this comparison, the word “length” simply refers to the long side, and “width” refers to the short side. However, in the case of the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios and the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin, “height” would be more appropriate than “length” because of the orientation of the iconography.

comparison to the Ohrid embroidery is especially appropriate because the iconography of the center panel makes the Thessaloniki embroidery quite similar to the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios as opposed to the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš. Gabriel Millet grouped the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (in his group 1c) with the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios donated by the metropolitan John of Skopje in the mid-fourteenth century.⁵⁶ In the quality and style of embroidery, the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is closer to the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios. In iconography, the comparison to the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje is more appropriate.

The central panel (figure 13) of Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios shows Christ on the shroud. The abbreviations ΙΣ and ΧΣ encircled in blue silk thread are arranged above the head of Christ, which is also surrounded by a cruciform halo. The loincloth on the body of Christ is in blue silk as are the outlines and contour lines in the body. In the four corners are symbols of the evangelists, Matthew in the lower right, Mark in the upper right, Luke in the lower left, and John in the upper left. An inscription also identifies each of the evangelist symbols. Only the name of John is abbreviated, as “Ιω.” The names of Mathew and Mark are in a thread of a different color from that used to embroider the names of Luke and John. The thread for Luke and John matches the blue silk thread used in inscriptions elsewhere, which suggests that the inscription for Matthew and Mark are repairs of a later period. These are not the only evidence for such restoration, but repairs made to the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios have been relatively successful compared to other early aër-epitaphioi.

The composition is arranged in three zones from bottom to top. These zones

⁵⁶ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 94–99.

correspond to the foreground, middle ground, and background of the fictive space. In the background, in the zone above the body of Christ, are two pairs of angels. Each angel is identified by the inscription ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΚΥ in blue thread. The first two (figure 14), embroidered with blue robes and golden halos above the abdomen and pelvis of Christ, are the “deacons” who hold the rhipidia. The leftmost angel holds a rhipidion decorated with a six-winged design, and the second angel holds the trisagion. Each wears an orarion over the left shoulder, and the two oraria are embroidered with the trisagion. The second pair of angels (figure 15) is the earliest evidence for the shift toward a dramatic presentation of the iconography on the aër-epitaphios. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is of the “liturgical” type, but there is a new hint of narrative drama introduced. These angels seem to instigate the transition from the purely “liturgical” iconography of examples such as the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios toward the more dramatic presentation of the lamentation (Threnos) iconography of later examples such as the Dobrovăț Monastery Aër-Epitaphios of 1506 (catalogue number 49, figure 80). These two angels are essentially mourners, one holding its hands to its face in a gesture of lamentation, the other turning to its partner as if experiencing the emotion of the scene vicariously. The naturalism of these two figures help to account for the attention this object has received as one of the finest examples of Palaiologan art. In the foreground, the zone below the body of Christ, are the figures of two thrones (circles with eyes and wings) alternating from left to right with a seraph (six-winged figure) and a cherub (four-winged figure). Embroidered around these winged figures is the trisagion (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ) in the same reddish-brown thread used to embroider the names of Matthew and Mark.

The entire object has a border of crosses in circles in the same palette of red, gold,

and blue thread as the rest of the aër-epitaphios. Separating the central panel from the aëres at either end are narrow bands of blue and gold embroidery in a zigzag pattern. At the left is the standard iconography for the poterokalymma (figure 11), and on the right is the standard iconography for the diskokalymma (figure 12). Both panels have inscriptions that seem to be later repairs or additions in reddish thread. On the left panel is the inscription “ΠΙΕΤΕ ΕΞ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ (Τ)ΟΥΤΩ ΕΣΤ(Ι) / ΤΟ ΕΜΑ ΜΟΥ ΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΚΕ/ΝΙΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ” (Drink from it, all; this is my blood of the covenant). On the right panel is the inscription “ΛΑΒΕΤΕ ΦΑΓΕΤΕ ΤΟΥΤΩ / ΕΣΤΗΝ ΤΟ ΣΩ/ΜΑ ΜΟΥ” (Take, eat, this is my body). These inscriptions are typical of those found on kalymmata.

The date-range for the creation of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is relatively difficult to determine. Its inscriptions do not name a patron or any other person or place that might help us reason about where and when the object was made. For this reason, the quality and style have been particularly important, and this usually leads to the conclusion that the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is an early example of about 1300. Sharon Gerstel, Anna Muthesius, and Laskarina Bouras tend to date this work to around 1295, or shortly thereafter, because of the stylistic resemblance to frescos in the Church of St. Kliment, Ohrid, which are dated 1294/5 and were painted by Michael Astrapas and Eustychios.⁵⁷ There is no reason to reject an early date, and the resemblance of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios to paintings of circa 1300 in the area around Thessaloniki (as opposed to Constantinople) does tend to confirm the conclusions of Bouras, Muthesius and Gerstel. In other words, because the style of this embroidery resembles the painting style that flourished during the reign of Andronikos II, the date of circa 1300 is

⁵⁷ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 189; Bouras, “The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki,” 214; Gerstel, “The Aesthetics of Orthodox Faith,” 334.

acceptable even if we remain skeptical about attempts to attribute this aër-epitaphios to a particular workshop.⁵⁸

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5. (Figure 16)

Aër-Epitaphios at the Church of Agios Athanasios.

144 x 122 cm.

Early 14th Century.

The Church of Agios Athanasios, Kymi, Euboea, Greece.

The Aër-Epitaphios at the Church of Agios Athanasios has received very little scholarly attention compared to objects of similar age and quality. It has been published only twice with a photograph: once in a catalogue of an exhibition that took place in Athens in 1985 (catalogue entry for number 245 by Maria Theocharis); once in an article by Laskarina Bouras in which she compared it to the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.⁵⁹ It has been mentioned in only two other publications. Juliana Boycheva mentioned the Aër-Epitaphios at the Church of Agios Athanasios in an article about the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios.⁶⁰ In an article about the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, Anna Muthesius attributed the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios to a Palaiologan Imperial workshop that she cautiously suggested also produced several of the most important embroideries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶¹ That attribution is reasonable, if we assume that there was such a workshop. Muthesius made this attribution primarily because of the similarities in style and quality among the objects, but the similarities can be explained in other ways.

The Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios does resemble the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios in some easily observable ways. The luxury is comparable, with more metallic thread across the whole surface than is typical, and the entire background might once of have been covered with metallic thread. The pattern of iconography is essentially the

⁵⁹ Kypraiou, ed. *Vyzantine kai metavyzantine techne*, 217; Bouras, "The Epitaphios of Thessaloniki," 212.

⁶⁰ Boycheva, "Plashtanitsa ot Ohrid," 702.

⁶¹ Muthesius, *Studies in Silk*, 193.

same, for example, with the figure of Christ shown in semi-profile on what is probably meant to represent the stone of the tomb rather than the shroud. That point is open to interpretation, but the design suggests that we are being shown the edge of the stone decorated with a pattern of square motifs alternating with a sets of four red circles. The body again is shown as though in the middle ground with angels in the background above the figure of Christ. Here there are only three angels: the two “deacons” with rhipidia and oraria, and one “mourner” with covered hands. The mourner in this case is quite stoic compared in the angels on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. In the bottom zone of the central panel is one six-winged seraph flanked by two pairs of interlocking, winged rings representing thrones. In each of the corners is one of the symbols of the evangelists, Matthew in the upper left, Mark in the lower left, Mark in the lower right, and John in the upper right. Each symbol holds a gospel book. At least John is identified with an inscription, but damage has obscured the others. The abbreviations ΙΣ ΧΣ appear in circles above the head of Christ.

In the border around the center panel are portraits of saints. There are nine busts in medallions along the right side, near Christ’s feet. There are eight busts in medallions along the left side, near Christ’s head. In the center medallion of the left border is the Hetoimasia, and the whole set of medallions along this border form a Deesis. The other two borders, along the top and bottom, have eight full-length portraits each. The orientation of the whole border is perpendicular to the orientation of the central panel. The central panel is organized so that the composition is horizontal with Christ’s head at the left and feet at the right. The border is oriented as though Christ’s head were the top of the composition rather than the left side. It is not an unusual to have this kind of

disagreement about orientation among parts of the composition. This confusion is actually a clue to understanding how the objects were used and displayed. Compared to painted icons and frescos, the composition was more fluid on an object such as the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios because it would have been used in procession. An aër-epitaphios was meant to move and to be seen in motion, and the orientation of the composition would actually change depending on where the viewer was standing when the cloth was displayed.

The differences between the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios and the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, however, do suggest some separation between them, whether that separation was geographical or chronological. The differences might also be simply the differences between two workshops. Most obvious among the differences are the slightly more stoic postures of the angels in the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios. The figure of Christ is also less dynamic, but somewhat more naturalistic, the head at a less dramatic angle to the body than is the case in the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. In the pose of the body of Christ the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios resembles the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios more closely than the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. The range of colors is broader in the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios than that in the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Green is conspicuous, especially in the symbol of John in the upper right corner of the center panel. A motif of scrolling acanthus leaves runs along either side of the body of Christ. This motif is not like anything found in the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, but it resembles the motif that runs throughout the border of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, although it is more freely rendered in the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios. The knees of Christ are another noteworthy detail in the Agios Athanasios Aër-

Epitaphios where they echo the pattern in the scrolling acanthus motif. The knees are rendered with a similar pattern in the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, but there the execution of the design is more reserved.

The differences among the three related examples, the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios, Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, and the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, are not so great that the three cannot be the product of one workshop. All three might have been made in Constantinople or Thessaloniki, but we cannot know whether they were the products of the same workshop. Because the date of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios is fairly precise, and all three aër-epitaphioi share conspicuously similar details of style, it is safe to conclude that the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios and the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios were also made during the early decades of the thirteenth century.

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6. (Figures 17–18)
Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios 1).
198 x 125 cm.
Ca. 1346.
Chilandar Monastery, Mount Athos.

Although it is now a patchwork of at least two embroideries, the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje is an important textile. The high quality of embroidery and the extensive inscription in Church Slavonic provide more clues than most early examples about the origin and intended function of the object itself. Fortunately, this and the other objects in the treasury at Chilandar survived a disastrous fire at the monastery on the night of 3–4 March 2004.⁶² Because of similarities in iconography, Gabriel Millet groups the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje in his group 1c with the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10).⁶³ The compositions of these two aër-epitaphioi are similar. In its style, however, the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje has more in common with the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 5, figure 16). That style includes a certain stoicism in the handling of the angels. The outlines of the figures in the Chilandar embroidery are somewhat thicker than those in the Thessaloniki embroidery. The contour lines of both the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje and the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios are exaggerated and less naturalistic.

The knees, chest and abdomen of Christ especially demonstrate how the embroiderer of the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios treated the body of Christ as an abstract design, a series of curvilinear shapes interrupted by the angles of the loincloth. The pose of Christ on the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios is different from the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios in the angle of the head, which is less exaggerated. The arms of the figure of

⁶² See the Chilandar Monastery Web site at <http://www.hilandar.org>.

⁶³ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 94–99.

Christ are folded over the figure's abdomen. This pose is relatively rare, but the Victoria and Albert Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 21, figure 41) and the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) share this feature. The composition in the central panel of the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios is similar to that of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios, but there are some small differences. In the corners are the four symbols of the evangelists: the winged man in the upper right, the eagle in the upper left, the lion in the lower left, and the ox in the lower right. Each holds a gospel book, but none is identified with an inscription. The color scheme in each corner is slightly different from the others. The palette of colors for the whole central panel of the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje is much more varied than the range of colors on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.

The rectangular space of the central panel is again divided into three zones, conceived as foreground, middle ground, and background; but the bottom zone (foreground) is reduced almost to nothing in the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios. In this space is one of the inscriptions. This inscription is the beginning of the Trisagion: ++ СТЫ . БЖЕ . СТЫ . КРЪПКИ СТЫ БЕСМТНИ ПОМАДНИ НАСЪ + (Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have pity on us).⁶⁴ Just above the inscription are three thrones, pairs of interlocking winged rings with eyes. The thrones overlap the gold embroidery that represents either the shroud or the stone of the tomb. It is again probably the stone of the tomb because the pattern of gold couching changes as though to represent the facing edge of the stone. The body of Christ occupies the middle zone, and above Christ are an

⁶⁴ For transcriptions, I follow Lazar Mirković and Gabriel Millet. Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 16–17; Mirković, “Dve Srpske plashtanitse,” 115; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 95–96.

inscription and two groups of angels. Here we find three “deacons” carrying rhipidia and wearing oraria. The lead deacon’s orarion has black letters on a white ground, while the other two have white letters on a black ground. The second group of angels is a pair of “mourners.” In the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios the mourning angels are presented as though flying in from the left side of the composition. Both hold cloths to their faces, but their faces are more abstract, with harsher contour lines, than the angels on the more naturalistic Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. The two angels on the left are both identified as Ангел Ky (Angel of the Lord). Each of the three deacons is accompanied by the inscription ΑΓΙΟC, forming another Trisagion. The abbreviations ΙΣ ΧΣ appear above the head of Christ.

All the inscriptions are oriented the same way as the composition of the figures, so the panel is meant to be seen horizontally. This arrangement is unambiguous in this case. Other examples mix the orientation of inscriptions and figures as in the Agios Athanasios Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 5, figure 16) or the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21). The inscription in the space above the body of Christ is the title of the iconography: + ΝΑΔΒ ΓΡΟΒΝΟΙΕ ΡΗΔΑΝΗΕ (Lamentation at the Grave). This is the probably the earliest example of the use of the title on an extant embroidered aër-epitaphios. The other inscriptions in the central panel are either dedicatory or they relate to the liturgy. Some of them are troparia from the Holy Saturday Orthros. Along the top of the central panel, from the upper left corner to just above the head of the third “deacon”/cherub: +ЖНВОТЬ ВЪ ГРОВѢ ПОЛОЖИЦЕ ХА Н АГГАСКА ВОННѢСТВА ДНВАѢХѸ СЕ. СЪХОЖЕННІЕ ЕГО СЛАВЕЦЕ+ (In a tomb they laid you, O Christ, the life. The angelic hosts were overcome with awe, and glorified your condescension).

This is a variant of the first troparion from the beginning of the first stasis of the Epitaphios Threnos sung during the orthros on Holy Saturday.⁶⁵ The following inscription runs around the upper right corner, from just after the previous inscription to about the middle of the right side of the central panel, but with the letters in the vertical column oriented the same way as those in horizontal strip and arranged as a column from top to bottom: +ΘCNOVB̄ XE N AKO ΛB̄/VB̄ CTASHEN̄ NA ΓPOB̄B̄+ (You slept, O Christ, like a terrible lion in the tomb). Millet described this as an unpublished troparion.⁶⁶ The image is certainly similar to other troparia from the Holy Saturday Orthros.⁶⁷ I have not been able to identify an exact parallel in a known text. Millet noted that this phrase alludes to the prophecy of Jacob (Genesis 49:9).⁶⁸ To the left of the central panel, from top to bottom, with letters oriented vertically and arranged as a column: +НБCНТІЄ CНЛЫ ΘΑΗΒΗCІЄ CЄ CΤΡΑΧΟΜ̄ ΜΡΤΒΑ Ε ΡΕCІΙ. (All the hosts of heaven were filled with fear and wonder when they saw you dead). This is a troparion from the third stasis of the Epitaphios Threnos for Holy Saturday Orthros.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 96; Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rukopisej*, volume 2, 464.

⁶⁷ Ekklesia tes Ellados, *The Lenten Triodion*, trans. Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, *The Service Books of the Orthodox Church* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 627.

⁶⁹ Ibid; Mirković, “Dve Srpske plashtanitse,” 115; Ekklesia tes Ellados, *The Lenten Triodion*, 645.

inscription, part of the border around the central panel and part of the original aër-epitaphios, indicates that John of Skopje was the original patron of this piece. It also indicates that he was the metropolitan of Skopje. Another inscription runs from just after the dedication and continues counterclockwise up the right side with the letters oriented perpendicularly to all the other inscriptions: + ЦРЬ СПНТЬ Н МЛЪУНТЬ ВСА ЗЕ/МЛѦА ... СЪМОНЦІАЕТ.⁷⁰ The ellipsis in Mirković's transcription marks not letters that are missing but only letters that are difficult to read (figure 18). Millet fills in the gaps in Mirković's transcription: + ЦРЬ СПНТЬ Н МЛЪУНТЬ ВСА ЗЕ/МЛѦА НЪ АДЪ БДЕ СЪМОНЦІАЕТ (СЕ) (The King sleeps, and all the world is silent, but Hades wakes and trembles).⁷¹ Again, this is similar to phrases used in the Holy Saturday Orthros.⁷² I have been unable to locate a precise source for this inscription.

The final inscription, other than the titles of the scenes in the border, is in Greek written in Cyrillic characters, and it runs along the very bottom of the border, just below the procession of Church Fathers in which John of Skopje participates: + ΜΗΝΕΘΙΤΗ ΚΕ ΤΗΝ ΨΥΧΗΝ ΤΩ ΔΕΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΙΩ ΑΡΧΗΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΣΚΟΠΙΩΝ. ΑΜΗΝ (Remember, Lord, the soul of your servant John the archbishop of Skopje. Amen). This is the same formula found on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figure 5) and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8). If we accept the hypothesis that this formula indicates that the person named was dead at the time the inscription was made, then it seems to contradict the other inscription. However, it must be noted that the border in which this inscription in Greek is embroidered is probably not part of the

⁷⁰ Mirković, "Dve Srpske plashtanitse," 115.

⁷¹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 96–97.

⁷² See, for example, Ekklesia tes Ellados, *The Lenten Triodion*, 652.

original aër-epitaphios. The entire border, all the area around the central panel, was added later. In other words, the dedication written in the first person could have been made when John was alive. The dedication in the form of a commemoration for the Cherubikon could have been added after John was dead. It is also possible that John himself was alive when both inscriptions were made, and that it is incorrect to assume that the commemoration formula necessarily indicates that the subject of the memorial inscription was already dead. Whether the dedication inscriptions affect our understanding of how this object was intended to be used is a point discussed in Chapter 2 of Part I.

The border around the central panel is divided into seventeen smaller panels separated by a motif of scrolling vines alternating with a cross-in-circle motif. The bottom center panel is the Procession of the Church Fathers. The Church Fathers in this case are, from right to left, John of Skopje, Kyrill, Athanasios, Chrysostom, Therapon, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzos, and Basil. The other panels depict, clockwise from the bottom left, the Birth of the Virgin, the Ascension, the Anastasis, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the first of two seraphim, the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Baptism, the second seraph, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Women at the Tomb, Pentecost, and the Koimesis. Although the border is almost certainly a later addition, it is not necessarily the case that all parts of the border were added at the same time.

The second dedicatory inscription helps us date the object. As Lazar Mirković persuasively argues, since the Serbian Prince Stephan Dušan, crowned in 1346, is known to have visited Mount Athos, including Chilandar, in 1347 and 1348 when he made donations to the monasteries he visited, it is likely that the Aër-Epitaphios of John of

Skopje was taken to Athos during that period.⁷³ At least part of the border could have been added at that time. It is possible that the epitaphios was in Skopje before it was taken to Athos. In other words, the Metropolitan John of Skopje was the original patron. The object was altered after John died, and Stephan Dušan took it to Athos as part of the donations he made there. We can accept the year 1346 for the creation of the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios, following Mirković, as the most accurate date we can possibly deduce from the evidence.

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⁷³ R. P. Louis Petit and B. Korblev, eds., *Actes de Chilandar*, 2 vols., *Actes de L’Athos* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1975. Original publication St. Petersburg, 1915), 282–92; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 18; Mirković, “Dve Srpske plashtanitse,” 116.

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7. (Figures 19–20)

The Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos.

163.5 x 106.5 cm

1341–1354.

Vatopedi Monastery, Athos.

The remarkable Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos was first published only in 1998.⁷⁴ The iconography is of a rare type, and the closest relative of the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios is also in an Athonite treasury. The Aër-Epitaphios of the Pantokrator monastery (catalogue number 8, figure 21) looks very much like the Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos. Both have a simplified iconography showing only Christ with a cruciform halo against a background of the same decorative motif of crosses and circles. The decorative pattern covers the background and the border where scrolling acanthus leaves are added to the pattern. This pattern is somewhat denser on the Pantokrator embroidery. There is an angel in each corner of these two aër-epitaphioi. Each angel holds a rhipidion. Both use a limited palette of metal and silk thread emphasizing gold. Red, green, and blue are also used in the decorative pattern and in the halo around Christ's head, while different values of beige are used for flesh, and reddish-brown thread is used for the hair.

While the similarities between the Vatopedi and Pantokrator aër-epitaphioi are immediately recognizable, there are some important differences between them. The Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios is embroidered onto blue silk instead of red. The embroidery on the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios creates a somewhat stiffer pose in the body of Christ, and

⁷⁴ Theocharis, "Chrysokenteta amphia," 421–24; Theocharis, "Embroidery," 474; See also Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium During the Palaiologan Period," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 93, note 18

the style is more reserved in general than we find the Pantokrator embroidery. The Vatopedi embroiderer favored more controlled and less obvious outlines and contour lines, but created a less dynamic effect and more angular details. This difference in style is most obvious in when we compare details such as the calves and eyebrows in both embroideries. Other than stylistic differences, there are also differences in size and composition. They are roughly the same size, the long side of the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios measures 163.5 cm while the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is 142 cm long, but the ratio of long side to short side is somewhat different.⁷⁵ The ratio is approximately 1.4:1 for the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios and 1.54:1 for the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios.

The inscriptions on the Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos include a dedication and the monogram of the Vatopedi Monastery. The inscription on the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is limited to the title ΙΣ ΧΣ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΞΗΣ in two lines (figure 21). The analogous inscription on the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios is the same text arrayed over three lines followed by a line of crosses (figure 19): ΙΣ ΧΣ / Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ / ΤΗΣ ΔΟΞΗΣ / +++++ (Jesus Christ the King of Glory). The deacon spoke the phrase “King of Glory” quietly during the Great Entrance.⁷⁶ The letters of the inscription here are smaller and more restrained compared to the dramatic letters on the Pantokrator embroidery. Next to Christ’s feet is the dedication (figure 20): +ΔΩΡΟΝ / ΕΥΣΕΒΟΙΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΙ / ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ / ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ

⁷⁵ The dimensions of the Pantokrator embroidery given by Theocharis, 172 x 131 cm, must include the modern border. That border has been designed to accommodate the shape of the light fixtures in the case where it is displayed. Theocharis probably also includes the added border in her dimensions for the Vatopaidi Aër-Epitaphios, but the dimensions nonetheless create a longer rectangle than the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios. Theocharis, “Embroidery,” 473; Theocharis, “Chrysokenteta amphia,” 421.

⁷⁶ Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rukopisej*, volume 2, 609–11; Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 36.

KANTAKOYZHNOY (The gift of the devout King and Emperor of the Romans John Kantakouzenos). At the very bottom, within the border next to the feet of Christ is the Vatopedi monogram (figure 20): TOY BATONIEΔIOY (Of Vatopedi). The Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios lacks any dedication inscription or Monogram.

One of the most intriguing differences is the orientation of the angels in the corners. On the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios, the angels are presented as though the short side of the epitaphios, at the feet of Christ, is the bottom of the composition. That would suggest that the figure of Christ is meant to be seen as a vertical figure, as in the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figure 5) and the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8). This is reinforced by the orientation of the inscription, which suggests that the short side by the head of Christ is the top of the composition. However, the figure of Christ is presented in a semi-profile view very much like that on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10). On the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios, the angels are oriented as though the long side, on Christ's right, is the bottom of the composition, yet the inscriptions are all arranged the same way as the inscription on the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios. In each case then, it is not clear from what point of view the composition is meant to be seen, or whether it was meant to be seen from only one point of view.

That we know the name of the patron means that we have a fairly narrow date range of 1347 to 1354, the years during which John VI Kantakouzenos reigned as Emperor of the Romans.⁷⁷ Although the local council of Constantinople of 1351 took place during this period, there is no reason to assume that this textile or any other

⁷⁷ Alice-Mary Talbot, "John VI Kantakouzenos," in *ODB*, vol. 2, 1050; Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 1.

donation was necessarily made in that year. One of the most mysterious details of the history of this embroidery is that it seems to have been in Moldavia during the seventeenth century. Paul of Aleppo mentions, in his narrative of the voyage on which he accompanied the Patriarch Makarios of Antioch in 1653, that they saw at Iași (Jassy) an epitaphios from Vatopedi with an inscription that named the patron as John Kantakouzenos.⁷⁸ In 1940 Émile Turdeanu lamented that the epitaphios Paul of Aleppo saw in Iași was unknown to art historians at that time.⁷⁹ It is possible that there was more than one such object, but Maria Theocharis assumes that the epitaphios mentioned by Paul of Aleppo is identical to the one at Vatopedi today.⁸⁰ There is no reason not to agree. The description does match the extant embroidery very well. If we assume, however, that the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios was in Moldavia, then it is reasonable to wonder how and when it got there, and why and when it was returned.

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⁷⁸ Paul of Aleppo, *Voyage*, volume 24, p. 483. 1949 #78

⁷⁹ Turdeanu, "Les Épitaphes moldaves," 170.

⁸⁰ Theocharis, "Chrysokenteta amphia," 424.

8. (Figure 21)
Aër-Epitaphios at the Pantokrator Monastery.⁸¹
142 x 104 cm.
Mid 14th century.
Treasury of the Pantokrator Monastery, Mount Athos.

The relatively spare iconography of the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios, compared to the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10), leads to comparisons with the Aër-Epitaphios of Milutin Uroš (catalogue number 2, figure 5) and the Aër-Epitaphios of Vatra-Moldoviței (catalogue number 42, figure 66). These three (Milutin Uroš, Pantokrator, and Vatra-Moldoviței) make up Gabriel Millet's group 1a.⁸² If we follow the logic of Millet's groupings, then we should add to his group 1a both the Princeton Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 3, figure 8) and the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19), but it is better to consider the aër-epitaphioi from the Pantokrator and Vatopedi monasteries as forming their own group. Seen this way they tend to support the assertion of Maria Theocharis that the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is the product of an Athonite workshop.⁸³ This assumes that the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios was also the product of an Athonite workshop, but the only evidence we have for the association of the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios with Mount Athos is the Monastery's monogram embroidered in the border. As I have explained in Chapter 3, I am skeptical of attempts to attribute textiles to certain workshops based on such evidence. It is inescapable, however, that the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is very similar to the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios.

The Pantokrator embroidery is of a high quality technically, and the

⁸¹ I saw this textile in the treasury of Pantokrator Monastery in March 2004.

⁸² Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 87.

⁸³ Theocharis, "Embroidery," 473.

predominance of gold thread on red silk creates a striking visual effect. The style is somewhat more dynamic, if not haphazard, compared to the Vatopedi embroidery. Note, for example, how the cloth worn by the figure of Christ in the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios seems to be tugged at one corner by an invisible hand. Overall the Aër-Epitaphios at the Pantokrator Monastery is so similar to the Aër-Epitaphios at the Vatopedi Monastery that an attribution to the same workshop seems like an appropriate conclusion, whether or not that workshop was actually in an Athonite Monastery. If the two aër-epitaphioi are the products of the same workshop, the differences between the two embroideries invite us to speculate that more than one embroiderer worked on them. The circle, cross, and acanthus motifs are similar enough to have been embroidered by the same hand, but the inscriptions and the bodies of Christ are different enough almost to dismiss the idea that these parts of the two aër-epitaphioi were embroidered by one person. In other words, even if they are the products of the same workshop, these two embroideries were not executed entirely, if at all, by the same persons.

Despite the small stylistic differences between these aër-epitaphioi from the Vatopedi and Pantokrator monasteries, the similar iconography helps us draw conclusions about the intended functions of both textiles, and might help us establish a date range for the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios in the absence of a dedicatory inscription. Both seem to have been designed to be read vertically, with the text embroidered above the head of Christ as though that is the top of the composition. The figure of Christ on the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is clearly shown as though lying down and in profile, so that a horizontal display on the altar also makes sense. The only inscription on the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios is the title ΙΣ ΧΣ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΔΟΞΗΣ (Jesus Christ the King of

Glory), words spoken during the Great Entrance. The arrangement of text suggests that the textile would have been displayed upright during the Great Entrance, if the object were carried as described in a Euchologion of the fifteenth century, originally from the Great Lavra on Mount Athos and now in the monastery of St. Katherine at Mount Sinai, draped over the back of the deacon.⁸⁴ In this arrangement, the figure of Christ would resemble a full-length version of the Akra Tapeinois (or Man of Sorrows) iconography. A wall painting of 1560 at the Saint Nicholas Church of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos shows how such an aër-epitaphios also could have been carried at the end of the procession (figure 110).⁸⁵ That same program shows a deacon wearing a textile decorated with the Akra Tapeinois iconography (figure 109).⁸⁶ The iconography is not sufficient evidence to determine how this textile was meant to be used. This embroidery was most likely an aër meant to be carried during the great entrance, although the possibility that it could also have been used as epitaphios during Holy Week cannot be discounted. This is also true of the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios.

In the absence of a dedicatory inscription by the feet, like the one on the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios, the embroiderers of the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios instead present a mosaic-like pattern of colored squares. This choice may have been made precisely to compensate for the lack of an inscription for this space, suggesting that the Vatopedi embroidery was the model for the Pantokrator embroidery. If this is the case, then the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios postdates the Aër-Epitaphios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos. The two embroideries probably date from the same period, however, and

⁸⁴ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 36; Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rukopisej*, volume 2, 609–11.

⁸⁵ Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, figure 256.2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 61 and figure 257.2.

we can confidently date the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios to the period 1347–1354 or shortly after.

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- Millet, Gabriel. *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*. Paris: Ernest Leroux 1939, Presses Universitaires de France, 1947, pp. 87 and 89, plate 176, 2.
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9. (Figure 22)

Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis.⁸⁷

170 x 116 cm.

Late 14th century.

The Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis (Great Meteoran), Meteora, Kalambaka, Greece.

Maria Theocharis has noted that the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis is very similar to several later epitaphioi from Moldavia.⁸⁸ The iconography of this aër-epitaphios is quite different from all the other extant examples of the fourteenth century. The iconography is not innovative. Each element of the composition, each figure or motif, has a counterpart on an earlier example. What makes the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis different is the arrangement of the figures and motifs. Here we have the figure of Christ shown in profile very much like the figure of Christ on the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19), but with the arms of the figure at his side rather than crossed over his body. As in the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios or the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21), the figure of Christ on the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios seems to float rather than rest on a shroud or stone as in the aër-epitaphioi of Agios Athanasios (catalogue number 5, figure 16) or John of Skopje (catalogue number 6, figure 17). In such examples, it is as though the actual cloth itself, on which the figure is embroidered, is meant to be understood as the shroud on which the figure of Christ is represented. But the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis resembles fifteenth-century aër-epitaphioi like the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia (catalogue

⁸⁷ I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I saw it again at the museum of the Metamorphosis Monastery in June 2005.

⁸⁸ Theocharis, “Le Moine brodeur Arsenios,” 35.

number 17, figure 36) more closely than it resembles other examples of the fourteenth century.

The whole is embroidered in silk and metal thread on a purple silk background. In each corner of the Metamorphosis Aër-Epithafios is an evangelist symbol holding a gospel book. The evangelists are not identified with inscriptions, perhaps to emphasize the eschatological significance of the symbols. In the zone above Christ (on the figure's left side) are three angels—a deacon (with a rhipidion and an orarion embroidered with ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ) by the torso, a mourner with hands covered above the pelvis, and another mourner above the legs. By the halo around the head of Christ is an inscription in gold thread: ΙΣ ΧΣ Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ / ΘΡΕΝΟΣ (JESUS CHRIST THE EPITAPHIOS THRENOS). Within the arms of the cross in the halo is the abbreviation Ο ΩΝ (The One Who Exists). In the zone below the figure (on Christ's right hand) are four more angels—a deacon (also with a rhipidion and an orarion embroidered with ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ) by the shoulder, a six-winged seraph by the abdomen, and two thrones by the legs. In the larger of the two thrones (linked rings with wings and eyes) there is also a mistake in the distribution of color. One of the embroiderers began to fill in one of the rings with a dark thread, the same color used in half of the smaller throne, but changed to a lighter thread. The space around the figures is filled with a motif of stars, each star made up of six segments. A narrow border runs around the whole composition, and the border is filled with an inscription:

+ΤΗΝ ΦΟΒΕΡΑΝ ΣΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑΝ ΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΝ · ΠΙΣΤΕΙ ΚΑΙ
ΠΟΘΩ / ΠΡΟΣΔΟΚΩ ΕΞΙΣΤΑΜΕ ΚΑΙ ΤΡΕΜΩ * ΠΩΣ ΑΤΕΝΙΣΩ ΣΟΙ ΚΡΙΤΑ
ΠΩΣ ΕΙΠΩ ΜΟΥ ΤΑΣ ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ * ΤΙΝΑ ΜΕΣΙ / ΤΗΝ ΧΡΕΙΣΩΜΕ ΠΩΣ
ΦΥΓΩ ΤΑΣ ΚΟΛΑΣΗΣ * ΑΠΑΓΟΡΕΒΩ ΕΜΑΥ/ΤΟΝ ΠΡΟ ΣΕ ΝΥΝ
ΚΑΤΑΦΕΥΓΩ ΣΩΣΟΝ ΜΕ ΣΟΤΕΡ ΔΩΡΕΑΝ Σ(ΩΤ)ΕΡ ΔΩΡΕΑΝ ΔΙ ΟΙΚΤΟΝ
ΕΥΣΠΛΑΧΝΙΑΝ * ΑΓΙΟΣ Θ(ΕΟ)Σ*

(I look for your awful Second Coming, O King, in faith and longing and I am filled with amazement and trembling. How will I look at you, O judge; how will I tell you my deeds; what mediator will I use; how will I escape Hell? I renounce myself; I turn to you now. Save me, O Savior, with the gift of your compassion, through your mercy, Holy God.)

As with the iconography as an ensemble, the inscription emphasizes the eschatological significance of the rite in which the aër-epitaphios would be used.

The difference in quality among the figures and faces has caused scholars to speculate about how many embroiderers worked on this aër-epitaphios. Lazaros Deriziotis, for example, sees evidence of two “craftsmen of different skills, technique, and style of rendering form” at work.⁸⁹ Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina also discerns the work of two artists, each working in a regional style.⁹⁰ The faces of the angels in the upper zone are in a distinctly less naturalistic style than the deacon and seraph in the lower zone. The greater naturalism suggested to Vlachopoulou-Karabina that an artist from Constantinople or Thessaloniki contributed to this textile.⁹¹ That artist, according to this Vlachopoulou-Karabina’s theory, was visiting a workshop in Ioannina, a city in northern Epiros where this textile might have been made. The more naturalistic style is assumed to be less provincial, but this argument has been a commonplace in the study of Byzantine art. The argument depends, in this case, upon the assumption that the quite naturalistic style of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios was necessarily created in a workshop in Thessaloniki or Constantinople. The similarity of the style of certain figures on the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios to the style of the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios means, in Vlachopoulou-Karabina’s argument, that one embroiderer from the workshop

⁸⁹ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 314.

⁹⁰ Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “Ho Vyzantinos Epitafios tou M. Meteorou,” 327–28.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 328.

that produced the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios must have contributed to the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios. While this is possible, the argument is not completely convincing, or not convincing enough to suggest that an embroiderer from Thessaloniki or Constantinople necessarily worked on the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios. On the other hand, variations in style, technique, and quality do tend to support the idea that more than one embroiderer worked on the Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis.

Eleni Vlachopoulou-Karabina would date this textile to the 1380s because Maria Palaiologina made other gifts during that decade to the monastery where her brother John Uroš was now the monk Joassaph and the hegoumenos of the monastery.⁹² In 1372, John Uroš had abdicated his role as “emperor of the Greeks and Serbians” in Thessaly.⁹³ If we accept that a person as prominent as John-Joassaph is likely to have been the patron of such a large and expensive epitaphios, then any date during the period from 1372 to the end of the century would be plausible. Vlachopoulou-Karabina also offers the alternative theory that Joassaph commissioned the aër-epitaphios after the murder of his sister’s husband Thomas Preljubović in December 1384.⁹⁴ Although there is nothing, such as a monogram or name in the inscription, to link the epitaphios directly with John-Joassaph, Maria Palaiologina, or any other patron, such a large embroidered textile as the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios would require a wealthy patron. Vlachopoulou-Karabina’s theory is sound, if not conclusive. A date of the 1380s is, nonetheless, quite

⁹² Ibid.: 328–29; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 314; Donald M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus* (Oxford, 1957), 152.

⁹³ Nicol, *The Despotate of Epirus*, 152.

⁹⁴ Vlachopoulou-Karabina, “Ho Vyzantinos Epitafios tou M. Meteorou,” 329; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 314.

likely for this embroidered aër-epitaphios, but any date during the last quarter of the fourteenth century is just as possible.

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- . “Le moine brodeur Arsenios et l’atelier des Meteores au XVIème siècle.” *Bulletin de liaison du Centre international d’étude des textiles anciens* 45 (1977), p. 35, and figure 3 on p. 36.
- . *Ekklesiastika Chrysokenteta*. Athens: Apostolike Diakonia tes Ekklesias tes Ellados, 1986, p. 9, and figure 7 on p. 11.
- Vlachopoulou-Karabina, Eleni. “Ho Vyzantinos Epitafios tou M. Meteorou.” *Trikalina* 19 (1999): 307–30.

10. (Figure 23)
Aër-Epitaphios at the Stavronikita Monastery.⁹⁵
113 x 91.5 cm.
14th–15th century.
Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos.

If we follow the logic of Gabriel Millet's groupings, then we should add the Aër-Epitaphios at the Stavronikita Monastery to Millet's group 1b.⁹⁶ The other examples in that group are the aër-epitaphioi in Sofia (catalogue number 1 and catalogue number 11), Venice (catalogue number 12), and London (catalogue number 22). In common with those examples is the rather simple iconography of Christ on a shroud (in this case, rather than on the Stone of Unction), with two deacon-angels bearing rhipidia, an evangelist symbol in each corner, and cherubim and thrones. The two deacon-angels are identified in inscriptions as ΑΓΓ(E)Λ(OΣ) Κ(YΠΙΟ)Υ (Angels of the Lord). They wear oraria but these lack the usual embroidered inscription of ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ. Above the body of Christ is the inscription ΙΣ ΧΣ Ο ΕΝΤΑΦΙΑΣΜΩΣ (Jesus Christ the Entombment). "Ο Ἐνταφιασμῶς" means "The Entombment" and is used here simply as the title of the iconography, but it is unusual here because the iconography in this case is really neither the "Entombment" nor the "Epitaphios Threnos" but the figure of Christ as Amnos (i.e. the consecrated portion of the Eucharistic bread). This aër-epitaphios affirms that such iconography by this time had become more or less interchangeable.

Each evangelist symbol is identified with an inscription. They are, clockwise from the upper left, ΜΑΤΘΕ(O)Σ (Matthew), ΙΩ(ΑΝΝΗΣ) Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ (John the Theologian), ΛΟΥΚΑΣ (Luke), and ΜΑΡΚΟΣ (Mark). The inscriptions are embroidered directly onto the red silk background, while the evangelist symbols themselves seem to

⁹⁵ I saw this textile at the treasury of the Stavronikita Monastery in March 2004.

⁹⁶ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 87.

have been added here as appliqués. The whole aër-epitaphios is an assemblage of embroidery added as appliqués to the silk background and embroidery stitched directly onto the red silk. This seems to indicate that the appliqués were salvaged from an older embroidery. The older parts are the bodies and rhipidia of the deacon-angels, the evangelist symbols, the narrow inner border (around the central panel), and the cross-in-circle motif.⁹⁷ This suggests that the original embroidery from which the older parts were taken was probably also an aër-epitaphios. The rest of the embroidery, including the body of Christ, is more recent and probably recreates the earlier aër-epitaphios. Both stages of embroidery are of high quality, although the body of Christ is awkwardly placed and out of proportion compared to the shroud.

Because the embroidery was done in at least two stages, dating this work is more difficult than usual. The iconography itself cannot help us because it resembles very early examples of the early fourteenth century and examples from the early fifteenth century, which is the period spanned by Millet's group 1b. As Maria Theocharis notes, the inscription Ο ΕΝΤΑΦΙΑΣΜΟΣ, is found also on the lost Aër-Epitaphios of Alexander the Good dated 1428 (the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 26).⁹⁸ If we take this to mean that the inscription on the Stavronikita embroidery is probably also from the fifteenth century, then all the embroidery stitched onto the background would date from the same period. Inscriptions that were part of the original embroidery, if there were any, have been lost. Some of the decorative elements, especially the acanthus leaves and cross-in-circle motifs of the inner border, are strikingly similar to the border decorations on both the Vatopedi and Pantokrator aër-epitaphioi (catalogue numbers 7 and 8), but the

⁹⁷ Patrinelis, Karakatsanis, and Theocharis, *Stavronikita*, 147.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

border of the Stavronikita Aër-Epitaphios is almost identical to the design in the border of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). This suggests a date as early as the late thirteenth century for the appliqués on the Stavronikita embroidery. The early fourteenth century, the probable period of the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, seems a more likely date for the appliqués, while the early fifteenth century seems likely for the rest of the embroidery on the Stavronikita Aër-Epitaphios.

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11. (Figure 24)

Aër-Epitaphios of Mathew and Anne from the Bachkovo Monastery.

165 x 115 cm.

14th century.

National Ecclesiastical Museum of History and Archaeology of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Sofia (Inventory number 6415).

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Bachkovo Monastery bears a strong resemblance to the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios. With virtually the same iconography as Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios also has an inscription composed in a similar formula as that on the Ohrid embroidery. Gabriel Millet includes the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios in his group 1b: Ohrid (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), Sofia (catalogue number 11), San Marco (catalogue number 12), and South-Kensington (the Victoria and Albert Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 22).⁹⁹ Each of these bears the simpler amnos-type iconography with the body of Christ laid on a shroud or slab and accompanied by a pair of deacon-angels with rhipidia. In this variation of the iconography, the deacons face each other. The other common elements are the evangelists in the corners and decorative motifs, especially a cross-in circle motif. In the case of the Bachkovo embroidery, the composition is further simplified by the restraint in the use of such decorative motifs.

While the iconography, and the formula of the inscription are very similar especially to the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios, the style of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios is quite different. There is a tendency toward a less naturalistic rendering of the faces and bodies, and the embroiders of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios were more sparing in their use of detail. The proportions of the figures, and their scale compared to one another, are similar to the other members of Millet's group 1b, but the figures take up more space within the composition. The deacons of the Bachkovo embroidery seem to hold up the top border

⁹⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 87–94.

with their rhipidia. Also unusual is presence of the feet of the deacons, which extend below the slab, or Stone of Unction. The slab seems to float before the deacons. The lower part of the composition, between the border and the feet of the deacons, is badly damaged with much of the embroidery and the silk background missing except for the cross-in-circle-motif in gold thread.

An identifying inscription accompanies each evangelist symbol. Clockwise from the upper left they are ΑΚ (Luke), ΜΤΘ (Matthew), ΙΩ (John), and ΜΡΚ (Mark). On the left side of the composition, near the cruciform nimbus behind the head of Christ is the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ. Above the body of Christ, between the two deacons is the title Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ ΘΡΙΝΟΣ (The Epitaphios Threnos). On the right hand of the body of Christ is an inscription embroidered as though it is on the stone slab: ΜΝΗΣΘΙΤΙ ΚΡ ΤΑΣ ΨΥΧΑΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΕΚΥΜΥΜΕΝΟΝ ΔΟΥΛΟΝ ΣΟΥ ΜΑΤΘΕΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΗΣ (Remember, O Lord, the souls of your departed servants Matthew and Anne). This inscription makes it clear that the persons named were dead at the time the embroidery was made, or at least at the time when the inscription was embroidered.

Unfortunately, the names Matthew and Anne do not help us narrow down the date. The formula of the inscription suggests an early date, in the same period as the *aër-epitaphioi* of Milutin Uroš and Michael Kyprianos (catalogue numbers 2 and 3), but the more abstract style and uncluttered composition call to mind later examples, such as the mid-fifteenth-century Neamț *Aër-Epitaphios* (catalogue number 28), suggests a somewhat later date. André Grabar noted the similarity to the Neamț *Aër-Epitaphios* as

evidence that the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios was probably of Moldavian origin.¹⁰⁰ Neither the date nor the provenance can be narrowed down so easily. The scrolling vine motif in the border of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios is quite similar to the scrolling vines used to decorate the central panel of the 1406/7 Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas, Son of Eudaimonoioannes in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (catalogue number 22). That aër-epitaphios, because the family name of the patron is linked to the Morea, may be Morean, i.e. of Peloponnesian origin.¹⁰¹ Simply comparing motifs and inscriptions will not help us to date the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios or to determine where it might have been made. Identifying Matthew and Anne is also difficult, but that would be more useful to us in determining both the date and the origin than any analysis of the style. Until a plausible argument can be made about the identity of Matthew and Anne, the fourteenth century is the narrowest date range that the evidence allows.

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¹⁰⁰ André Grabar, *La Peinture religieuse en bulgarie*, vol. 1, Orient et Byzance (Edited by Gabriel Millet. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928), 298, note 3.

¹⁰¹ Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 338; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 121.

Theocharis, Maria. “‘Epitafi’ della liturgie byzantina e la Sindone.” In *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone: un modello per l’arte cristiana* edited by Lamberto Coppini and Francesco Cavazzuti, 105–21. San Paolo: Edizione San Paolo, 2000, p. 116.

12. (Figure 25)
San Marco Aër-Epitaphios.
204 x 152 (center panel 159 x 109).
14th century, reworked in the 18th century.
Cathedral of San Marco, Venice (Museo Marciano, Inv. 1903, M. 32).

The San Marco Aër-Epitaphios was heavily reworked during the eighteenth century, the restoration having been carried out between the inventories of 1735 and 1757.¹⁰² This might have saved the original from complete destruction, but only a few fragments of that original were incorporated into the textile as we have it now. Those fragments include the faces and hands of the deacon-angels, the faces of the evangelist symbols, and the body of Christ. The 1735 inventory mentions, presumably describing the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios, that it was embroidered in gold and silk.¹⁰³ There is no gold embroidery on this textile. There is no dedicatory inscription now, if an inscription was part of the original.

If we assume that the composition emulates the original state of the embroidery mentioned in 1735, then this aër-epitaphios is very similar to the Stavronikita Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 10), another heavily restored textile. Gabriel Millet listed the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios with his group 1b, which also includes the aër-epitaphioi of Ohrid (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), Sofia (catalogue number 11), and London (the Victoria and Albert Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 22).¹⁰⁴ The iconography common to this group is presented on the San Marco embroidery in a composition less crowded than the others, but that might owe more to the eighteenth century restoration

¹⁰² Rodolfo Gallo, *Il tesoro di S. Marco e la sua storia* (Venice: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1967), 242–43; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 120.

¹⁰³ Gallo, *Il tesoro di S. Marco e la sua storia*, 242.

¹⁰⁴ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89.

than to the original embroiderers. Two deacon-angels occupy the upper zone of the central panel. They hold rhipidia and they face each other. Just below them is the body of Christ lying on the Stone of Uncion. Each corner contains an evangelist symbol surrounded by an arc-shaped frame. Clockwise from the upper left they are John, Matthew, Luke, and Mark. The only inscription is the abbreviated name ΙΣ ΧΣ, Jesus Christ, on the upper left corner of the slab just above the head of Christ. All embroidery is in silk, including the original fragments, on a yellow silk background. The decorative elements that fill the space of the central panel and the borders include a scrolling vine-and-leaf and a cross-in-circle motif. These may emulate the design motifs of the original embroidery, but they have been executed in an eighteenth-century style.

Unusually, the figure of Christ has a gospel book between his arms. Hans Belting suggests that this constitutes a reference to how the object would actually have been used, since an aër would cover a gospel book in procession on Good Friday.¹⁰⁵ Does this image prove that this particular textile was used to wrap the gospel book during the Great Entrance on Good Friday? While it is true that a gospel book was carried under a veil in procession on Good Friday, the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios is a unique example of this variation on the Christ as Amnos iconography. Even if the gospel book is part of the original Byzantine design, this detail is actually unnecessary for Belting's argument. The earliest source that describes the wrapping of the gospel book in an aër is dated 1346.¹⁰⁶ An aër covered the gospel book on Good Friday, whether or not the image on the aër referred to that function. Another interesting implication of this detail has to do with

¹⁰⁵ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 128.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Taft reports that this practice actually took place on Holy Saturday. The manuscript in question is Athos Vatopedi 954 (1199), dated 1346. Taft, "In the Bridegroom's Absence," 86.

dating the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios. If we accept that the gospel book under Christ's arm in the image on this textile refers to the liturgical practice of wrapping a gospel book in an aër to be carried in procession, then we would expect that the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios was not made much earlier than 1346.

The restoration makes the iconography difficult to interpret, and dating is nearly impossible, but the inventories of the treasury provide some possible clues about the date. The inventory of 1735 is not the first to mention a textile that might correspond to the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios. An inventory of July 19, 1597 mentions "Una coperta cō un Christo desteso cō 4 Evangelisti fodrata d'ormesin cremese" (A cloth with a reclining Christ with four Evangelists lined with crimson silk).¹⁰⁷ An inventory of 1283, cited by Maria Theocharis, lists a red cloth with an image of Christ in the middle.¹⁰⁸ If the 1283 inventory does indeed describe an aër or an epitaphios, does it describe this particular aër-epitaphios? If it does, then the surviving fragments of the original are certainly the oldest surviving evidence of an embroidered version of the iconography of Christ as Amnos.

It is possible, however, that two or more early aër-epitaphioi have been in the treasury of San Marco. Even if an aër or an epitaphios is what the 1283 inventory describes, it is not necessarily identical to the extant embroidery. If the present state of the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios was meant to recreate the object described in either 1597 or 1283, whether or not they were the same textile, then the restorers chose a different the

¹⁰⁷ Antonio Pasini, *Il Tesoro di San Marco in Venezia* (Venice: Ferdinando Ongania, 1887), 77; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89; Maria Theocharis, "I ricami bizantini," in *Il Tesoro e il Museo (Il Tesoro di San Marco volume 2)*, 91–97. Edited by H. Hahnloser. Florence: Sansoni, 1971), 97.

¹⁰⁸ Theocharis, "I ricami bizantini," 97.

color for the backing silk. The evidence of the embroidery itself allows us only to place the original of the San Marco Aër-Epitaphios in the same period as the other members of Millet's group 1b and the Stavronikita Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 10). The San Marco embroidery was probably made sometime during the fourteenth century.

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13. (Figures 26–28)

Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites from Glavenica and Berat, Albania.

218 x 118 cm.

1373.

National Museum of History, Tirana, Albania.

The Berat or Glavenica Aër-Epitaphios is one of the most famous medieval artifacts in Albania. It was even featured on an Albanian postage stamp issued in 1998 (figure 28). As significant as this embroidery is, it has not received enough scholarly attention. The iconography is a unique variation on the Amnos iconography. The lengthy dedicatory inscription provides us the name of the patron. It might even provide the name of the embroiderer, which would be the first in the history of Byzantine embroidery. The Glavenica Aër-Epitaphios is also the earliest aër-epitaphios to include a date in its inscription. It is also Albanian. That alone is enough to make this an unusual, extant, medieval textile.

While it merits closer study, I have not seen the Glavenica Aër-Epitaphios except in published photographs. Although the Glavenica Aër-Epitaphios has been mentioned in several publications since 1911, so far the only extended paper on the subject of this embroidery was published as recently as 2005.¹⁰⁹ The most significant scholarly work done so far is of two very different kinds. The usual epigraphic analysis has been the work of Theofan Popa.¹¹⁰ More recently Frederick Stamati subjected the Berat Aër-Epitaphios to energy dispersive X-ray microanalysis (EDX-RM).¹¹¹ Stamati provides a chemical analysis of the dyes used to color the cloth. Such information will be useful in further study of Byzantine textiles, but only when more examples are subjected to this

¹⁰⁹ Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica,” 139–45.

¹¹⁰ Popa, “Cinq inscriptions.”; Theofan Popa, “La Glavenice medievale et le Ballsh actuel,” *Studia Albanica* 1, no. 2 (1964): 121–28.

¹¹¹ Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica,” 139–45.

kind of analysis.¹¹²

The iconography of the Glavenica Aër-Epitaphios is unique. It has in common with other aër-epitaphioi the figure of Christ on a Shroud, four angels, and a pattern of decorative motifs in the space around the figures. The decorative pattern alternates rosettes and a scrolling vine-and-leaf motif. The angels occupy the lowest third of the central panel. The four angels are arrayed symmetrically and face the center of the composition. Each holds a rhipidion. The upper zone, above the figure of Christ shows three saints with unfurled scrolls: one above the abdomen of Christ, one above the shins, and one at the extreme right of the shroud on which the figure of Christ has been laid. These figures represent an embroidered version of the Procession of Bishops iconography familiar from fresco programs of Balkan church sanctuaries of the Palaiologan period. The saints, or bishops, above the figure of Christ on the Berat Aër-Epitaphios are posed frontally, but the third bishop, at the right of the composition, is in profile and faces the other two bishops. The extreme upper left corner shows a pair of mourning angels, like those from, for example, the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (catalogue number 6), except that the mourners face each other on the Berat embroidery.

Around the central panel is a border with a decorative pattern and twelve medallions. In the medallions along the top border, from left to right, are the Virgin, a seraph, the hetoimasia, another seraph, and John the Evangelist. At either side in the middle of the border is an evangelist portrait, the remaining two evangelist portraits taking the lower left and lower right corners. Another hetoimasia fills the bottom center

¹¹² The usefulness of chemical analysis and other types of close analysis is discussed in Part I, Chapter 3.

medallion, and this is flanked by two seraphim.¹¹³ The figure of Christ lies on a shroud. The shroud in this case is striped, and the red and white stripes have been treated in a zigzag pattern to create the effect of folds in the shroud. A cruciform nimbus surrounds the head of Christ. The hands of Christ rest on the figure's thighs rather than at his sides (as on the Metamorphosis Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 9) or crossed over the pelvis (as on the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 7) or abdomen (as on the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 6). To the left of Christ's cruciform nimbus is the abbreviated name of Christ followed by the title of the iconography: "ΙΣ ΧΣ Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ."

The dedicatory inscription is in Greek, embroidered in metal-wrapped thread, and it runs in two columns at either side of the central panel, but inside the outer border.¹¹⁴

Left Column:

+ΕΠ/ΛΗΡΩ/ΘΗ Ω / ΠΑΝΣΕ/ΠΤΟΣ / ΚΑΙ ΘΗ/ΟΣ ΑΕ/ΡΑΣ ΤΗΣ /
ΥΠΕΡΑ/ΓΗΑΣ ΘΕ/ΟΤΟΚΟΥ / ΤΗΣ ΑΣΑ/ΛΕΥΤΟΥ / ΔΗ ΕΞΟ/ΔΟΥ ΚΑ
ΚΟ/ΠΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΗ/ΕΡΟΤΑΤΟΥ/ ΕΠΗΣΚΟ/ΠΟΥ ΚΑ/ΛΗΣΤΟΥ /
ΓΛΑΒΕΝ/ΗΤΖΗΣ / ΚΑ ΒΕΛ/ΑΓΡΑΔΟΝ / ΕΝ ΜΗΝΗ / ΜΑΡΤΗΟ / •Κ•Β• / Ω
ΖΩ/ΠΑ*

(+This most sacred and holy aër of the most holy Theotokos the unshaken was made at the expense and by the efforts of the graceful Bishop Kalistos of Glavenica and Belagrad [Berat] in the month of March, on the 22nd, in 6881 [1373].)

Right Column:

+ΖΩΗΣ / Ο ΚΡΑΤΩΝ / ΦΕΥ ΠΟΣ / ΘΝΗΣΚΗΣ / ΑΙΠΝΟΥΣ / ΝΕΚΗΣ / * ΕΠΗ /
ΤΗΣ ΑΥ/ΘΕΝΤΗ/ΑΣ ΤΟΝ / ΗΨΗΛΟ/ΤΑΤΩΝ ΑΥ/ΘΕΝΤΩΝ / ΣΕΡΒΗ/ΑΣ ΚΑ

¹¹³ Alain Ducellier, "Observations sur quelques monuments de l'Albanie," *Revue Archéologique* 2 (1965): 198; Maria Theoharis, "'Epitafi' della Liturgia Bizantina e la Sindone," in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone: un modello per l'arte cristiana* ed. Lamberto Coppini and Francesco Cavazzuti (San Paolo: Edizione San Paolo, 2000), 121.

¹¹⁴ Stamati confirms that the metallic thread is metal wrapped around a silk core. Stamati, "The Epitaph of Gllavanica," 141.

ΡΟ/ΜΑΝΗΑΣ / ΚΑ ΠΑΣ/ΗΣ ΑΛ/ΒΑΝΟΥ / ΚΑ ΑΥΤΑ/ΔΕΛΦΟΝ /
ΓΕΟΡΓΗΟΥ / ΚΑ ΜΠΑΛ/ΣΑ• / +ΧΗΡ ΓΕ/ΩΡΓΗΟΥ / ΤΟΥ ΑΡΗΑ/ΝΤΗ ΚΑ
ΧΡΗ/ΣΟΚΛΑΒΑΡΗ

(+Ruler of the living, alas, like a dead, breathless corpse. Under the rule of the great princes of Serbia and Romania and all Albania the brothers Georgios and Balsha. +By the hand of Georgios Arianites and [a] gold-embroiderer.)

George Arianites bears a famous Albanian family name, but what was his role in the making of this embroidery? Theofan Popa attempted to link him to the family of the fifteenth-century Albanian ruler Skanderbeg (Gjergj Kastriotë).¹¹⁵ Whether or not this George Arianites was the grandfather of Skanderbeg's father-in-law, as Popa proposed, another question remains: was this George Arianites himself the same person as the gold-embroiderer mentioned in the inscription or only the person who hired the gold-embroiderer on behalf of Bishop Kalistos? Either interpretation is plausible, but the question cannot be answered as long as the inscription is the only evidence we have.

The information provided by the inscription is intriguing but frustrating. Both place names, Berat and Glavenica, are embroidered on this aër-epitaphios. Berat is certainly the same as the modern city, but the location of Glavenica has been something of a mystery.¹¹⁶ As Theofan Popa reported to Frederick Stamati, the epitaphios was for a time “in the cellar of a ruined house in Ballsh” where “it had been damaged by mice.”¹¹⁷ The modern city of Ballsh is possibly identical to the medieval city of Glavenica mentioned in the inscription on this aër-epitaphios. Since the inscription does not conform to a standard type such as those on the Belgrade and Princeton Aër-Epitaphioi

¹¹⁵ Ibid.: 140.

¹¹⁶ Carl Patsch, *Das Sandschak Berat in Albanien*, vol. 3, Schriften der Balkankommission, Antiquarische Abteilung (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1904; reprint, Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1976), 77 and note 4; Alain Ducellier, “L’Arbanon et les Albanais au XI^e siècle,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 3 (1968): 253–68.

¹¹⁷ Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica,” 140.

(catalogue numbers 2 and 3), we would hope to learn more from it about the intended function of the object, but the most conspicuous piece of information the inscription provides is the date. The earliest dated aër-epitaphios includes not only the year but also the day and month.

It also tells us who the patron was, Bishop Kalistos, and it mentions the Balsha brothers who had expanded their territory, by marriage, to include Berat in 1372.¹¹⁸ The inscription, by including so many names, invites us to consider the possibility that the function of this textile was not limited to its use in the performance of the liturgy. It could also have been read as a sign that the bishop and the region he served officially acknowledged the rule of the Balshas. We also know from the inscription that the liturgical function of this object was almost certainly for use during the Great Entrance, rather than on Holy Saturday. Some scholars have translated “ΑΕΡΑΣ” (aër) as “epitaf” or “epitaph.”¹¹⁹ This is misleading. While the title “Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ” (The Epitaphios) is embroidered next to Christ’s halo, the term used in the dedication to refer to the object itself is “aër.” The word “epitaphios” is just the title of the iconography, and the word “aër” refers to one of the intended functions of this textile.

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¹¹⁸ Ducellier, “Genesis and Failure,” 10.

¹¹⁹ Popa, “Cinq inscriptions,” 198; Stamati, “The Epitaph of Gllavanica,” 139.

- . “Epiros.” In *RBK*, Volume 2, 207–334. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971, 327–28.
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14. (Figure 29)

Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia.¹²⁰

221 x 123 cm.

1388/9.

State Historical Museum, Department of Textiles and Costume, Moscow (15494shch/1rb).

A large and impressively colorful embroidery, the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia was probably intended for use as an aër, a cloth to cover the diskos and chalice on the altar. The iconography is unusual but appropriate for the intended function of this textile. In the central panel is the Mandyllion embroidered with a white background representing the cloth of the acheiropoietos. The Mandyllion, and its significance for the Divine Liturgy, is discussed in Chapter 2 of Part I. The background cloth for the central panel of the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia is a white taffeta, according to Luiza Efimova, but it is discolored and might once have been either lighter or darker, or it might have faded from yellow.¹²¹ Whatever the original hue of the background cloth of the central panel, it seems originally to have been of a darker value than the silk representing the Mandyllion, which still stands out as lighter in value than the background.

On either side of the Mandyllion is a group of four figures. On the left are the Virgin, an archangel, Saint Peter, and Saint Alexius. On the right are John the Baptist, an archangel, Saint Maximus, and Saint Theognostus. These figures form a Deesis with the Mandyllion. Above the Mandyllion are four six-winged seraphim in blue and red silk thread. The lower wings of the two seraphim in the middle are overlapped by the edge of the Mandyllion. Below the Mandyllion, along the lower edge of the central panel are eight

¹²⁰ I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

¹²¹ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 318.

busts, each identified by an inscription in gold thread. From left to right they are the Princes Boris and Gleb, Alexius the Man of God, Nicholas the Miracle-Worker, Gregory the Theologian, Niketas the Martyr, Demetrius of Thessaloniki, and Prince Vladimir Equal to the Apostles.¹²²

The central panel and the outer border are both surrounded with dark borders of purple silk embroidered with a scrolling vine motif in gold and silver. In the light-blue silk border are the busts of twenty angels and archangels, each holding an orb and a scepter, seven each in the horizontal parts of the border, three each in the vertical sides. The variations in color scheme among these twenty figures create a striking effect with a vibrant palette of silk thread. In each corner of the border is an evangelist portrait in a medallion, rather than the usual evangelist symbols. Each portrait consists of a seated figure with a desk before him and an architectural element, suggesting a cityscape, behind him. In the upper left, identified by an inscription is Matthew. Luke is in the upper right medallion. The letters “ος” are all that remain of the inscription for the figure in the lower right, indicating that this figure is Mark, while John is in the lower left medallion although his inscription is now missing.

Luiza Efimova wrote in the catalogue for the 2004 exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York that this textile was probably used as a hanging and not as an aër.¹²³ The inscription identifies this liturgical vestment as an aër (воздых in Church Slavonic, a literal translation of the Greek word ἀήρ), and the iconography is appropriate for an aër, even though it is a unique

¹²² While I was unable to see these inscriptions clearly during the New York exhibition in 2004, Luiza Efimova provides this information in her catalog entry. Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 319, note 1.

example of the Mandylion on a large aër. The composition simply adapts elements of the type of iconography usually painted on the walls of church sanctuaries of this period. The early date, for a Russian aër, might help to account for the unexpected iconography. The image of Christ as Amnos was not necessarily the only image considered appropriate for the aër. Both the Mandylion and Christ as Amnos were also used in wall paintings in churches, in different registers of the sanctuary.

The inscriptions on the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia are difficult to read because they were embroidered in gold thread in rather small characters along the top edge of the upper part of the faded blue silk border and along the top edge of the lower part of the blue silk border: В ЛЕТО 8ЦЦУЗ...УНА ШНТЬ БЫС СНН...В(ОЗ)ДУХЪ ПОВЕЛЕНЕМ ВЕЛКННН КНЯГНН М(А)РЬН СЕМЕНОВЬНА... (In the year 6897 the present aër was embroidered at the behest of Grand Princess Maria Semenovia). 6897 is the year 1388/9. The word “ВОЗДУХ” indicates that this object was probably meant for use during the Great Entrance rather than only for display. Along the top and bottom of the border the inscription continues with a phrase taken from the liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: ПОЙТЕ И ГЛАГОЛАНТЕ: СВЯНТ СВЯНТ СВЯНТ ГОСПОДЬ САВАОФ НСАОАНЪ НЕБО И ЗЕМЛЯ СЛАВЫ ТВОЕЯ (Praise and say: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, thou who hast filled heaven and earth with thy glory). Along the upper border is this inscription: СОВОРЪ АНГ(Е)ЛЪ И АРХ(А)НГ(Е)Л (Council of the Angels and Archangels).¹²⁴

Natalija Mayasova suggests that this aër commemorates the 1380 victory over the Mongols at Kulikovo by Prince Dmitrii Donskoi of Moscow and Prince Vladimir

¹²⁴ The transcriptions here follow those given by Luiza Efimova. Ibid., 318.

Adreevich of Serpukhov.¹²⁵ Efimova follows Mayasova arguing that the Mandyllion was depicted on this embroidery because the Mandyllion was also depicted on Russian battle flags.¹²⁶ While this embroidered aër might commemorate the military victory of nine years earlier, such a function is neither necessary nor sufficient to explain the use of the Mandyllion as part of the composition. It would help to explain, however, the presence of the Saints Boris and Gleb, Demetrius of Thessaloniki, and Vladimir since these were the patrons of Prince Dmitrii Donskoi and Prince Vladimir Adreevich.¹²⁷ If we take the dedication at its word, then we must assume that this embroidered cloth was intended to be used as an aër, and this aër confirms the association between the meaning of the Mandyllion as an image and the function of the aër as a type of liturgical textile.

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¹²⁵ Mayasova, "Pamiatnik moskovskogo zolotnogo shit'ia XV veka," 491.

¹²⁶ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 319.

¹²⁷ Mayasova, "Pamiatnik moskovskogo zolotnogo shit'ia XV veka," 491; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 319.

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15. (Figures 30 and 31)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Cozia Monastery, Wallachia.¹²⁸

177 x 144 cm.

1395/6

National Museum of Art, Bucharest, Romania (Inventory number 181/15.826).¹²⁹

The Cozia Aër-Epitaphios is the earliest evidence for the transition from aër to epitaphios. This textile might actually be the first example that we can confidently describe as having been intended for use as an epitaphios rather than as an aër. However, the two categories might still have overlapped at the end of the fourteenth century. As Pauline Johnstone pointed out, this is one of the earliest, if not the very earliest datable example to include the Virgin and John the Theologian in the composition with the figure of the dead Christ.¹³⁰ This turns the iconography into a narrative scene of the Epitaphios Threnos. The inscription around the border is a Slavonic version of the hymn “Σιγησάτω πᾶσα σὰρξ βροτεία,” which replaces the Cherubikon on Holy Saturday.¹³¹ The origin of the hymn and just when it was that the hymn became associated with Holy Saturday has not been resolved.¹³² This is the earliest extant embroidered aër-epitaphios to include this hymn.

The iconography is not crowded, with only seven figures, but the figures do fill the space in the upper half of the composition. It resembles the iconography of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11, figure 24), but the Cozia Aër-

¹²⁸ I saw this textile at the National Museum of Art, Bucharest in July 2005.

¹²⁹ Ion Barnea, Octavian Iliescu, and Corina Nicolescu, *Cultura bizantina in România. Catalogul expoziției organizată cu prilejul celui de al XIV-lea congres internațional de studii bizantine, București, 6–12 Septembrie 1971*. (Bucharest: Comitetul de Stat pentru Cultura și Arta, 1971), 124, 231.

¹³⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 26.

¹³¹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 104.

¹³² Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 41; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 76–77.

Epitaphios adds the figures of Mary, John the Theologian and two more Angels. The unique variation on the Epitaphios Threnos iconography led Gabriel Millet to classify the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios as the only example of his group 2b.¹³³ The figure of Christ is represented as lying on a tomb or on a stone slab, the Stone of Unction, like that of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios, but the Cozia stone is rendered with a crude linear perspective rather than the isometric perspective of the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios or the reverse perspective on the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). Along the edge of the slab and between the slab and the lower border are two elaborate decorative patterns unlike those on other examples. Christ's hands are crossed over his pelvis and a cruciform nimbus surrounds the figure's head. In the area just above the figure of Christ are Mary and John. Mary bends over and embraces Christ, her left hand on his right arm. Her head, surrounded by a halo, points to the left side of the composition. John the Theologian appears just above Christ's legs. He, too, bends over, his head pointing to the left side of the composition, but his arms are not shown, as though he is holding his arms behind the slab. Much of the blue silk ground has worn away. It survives in patches around the border and around the embroidered inscriptions. Blue silk also shows through in the body of Christ. Green silk thread is used for the contour lines in John, scarlet for the Virgin. Halos, the surface of the tomb (or stone slab) itself, and the inscriptions are all embroidered with gold wire.

The abbreviation MP ΘΥ (Meter Theou—Mother of God) appears just above the head of the Virgin, between the two angels on the left side of the composition. Just to the left of the halo around John's head is the inscription ὁ ἅγιος Ιω(άννης) ὁ Θεολόγος (Saint

¹³³ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

John the Theologian). The four deacon-angels are arrayed symmetrically, all facing the center of the composition. One pair, those near the middle, hold rhipidia, and the other two hold pastoral staffs (figure 31). Between the central pair of angels are the words ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος (holy holy holy). Just above the heads of the angels is the title Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ ΘΡΕΙΝΟΣ (the Epitaphios Threnos). The border inscription is a slightly abbreviated version of the hymn “Let all mortal flesh be silent.”

+ДА СМЛѢУНТЪ ВСѢКА ПАТЬ ЗЕМНАГА Н ДА СТОИТЪ СТРАХОМ Н ТРЕПЕТОМ СЕ БО
ЦРЬ ЦАРСТВѢЖ/ЦНМЪ Н ГОСПОДЬ ГОСПОДСТВѢЖЦНМЪ ХС БѢ НАШЪ ПРИХОДИТ
ЗАКЛАТИСА Н ДАНѢ БЫТИ ВЪ / ПИЦІЖ ВѢРНЫМЪ ПРѢДВАРѢЖТ ЕГО ЛИЦН
АНГЕЛЬСТН СЪ ВСѢМН НАУАЛЫ Н ВЛАСТН МНОГОУНТАА ХЕР8/ВНМН Н ЗКРНЛАТА
СЕРАФНМН ЛИЦА НАКРЫВААЦА Н ВЫПНАЦА ПѢСНЬ СТ СТ СТ * В ЛѢТ ϣΥΔ

(Let all mortal flesh be silent and stand in fear and trembling. For the King of kings and Lord of lords Christ our God comes to be slaughtered and given as food to the faithful. Before Him go the choirs of angels with all the principalities and powers, the cherubim with many eyes, and the six-winged seraphim covering their faces and crying the hymn: Holy Holy Holy. In the year 6904).

The date in this inscription is disputed because of different interpretations of the final character of the inscription. Nicolae Iorga and N. P. Kondakov interpreted the date as 6904 (1396).¹³⁴ Gabriel Millet and Émile Turdeanu saw 6930 (1422).¹³⁵ Pauline Johnstone pointed out that the confusion arises from the difficulty of discerning just what the final character is, a difficulty Millet had also noted but dismissed as resolved in favor of 6930.¹³⁶ The final three figures at the end of the inscription at the lower left corner of the border are either ϣΥΛ (6930) or ϣΥΔ (6904). Millet simply stated that one can read

¹³⁴ Iorga and Balș, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien*, 36; Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 264.

¹³⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 104; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 171.

¹³⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 122; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 104.

that the figure is Λ rather than Δ despite the wear.¹³⁷ As Johnstone explained, however, the date is “almost certainly 6904 (1396), but wear on the final *delta* has caused some scholars to read 6930 (1422).”¹³⁸ On close inspection the date 6904 is easily confirmed.

Demetrios Pallas grouped the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios with others bearing the text of the hymn “Σιγησάτω πᾶσα σὰρξ βροτεία.” The others that Pallas listed are the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia (catalogue number 34, figure 58), a sixteenth-century epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity (figure 133), on which the hymn is in Slavonic, and a mid-17th-century epitaphios from Peta near Arta (figure 134), on which the hymn is in Greek.¹³⁹ To these must be added the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum (catalogue number 35, figure 59) of the middle or late fifteenth century. The Bloomington Epitaphios of 1534/5 (figure 96) also fits this category because of the hymn (an abbreviated Slavonic version), but the iconography of the Cozia epitaphios is unique. The Cozia Aër-Epitaphios is Gabriel Millet’s group 2b.¹⁴⁰ It represents the only example to add the Virgin and John, but only those two characters in the narrative. No other human figures are added, and the Evangelists are omitted altogether.

Nicolae Iorga attributed this embroidery to the early fifteenth century and the patronage of the Macedonian monk, Nicodim of Prilep, who founded the Tismana monastery in Wallachia in the late fourteenth century.¹⁴¹ It also has been suggested that

¹³⁷ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 104.

¹³⁸ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 122.

¹³⁹ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 800.

¹⁴⁰ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102, 04–05.

¹⁴¹ Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, volume 3, 305–06; For a history of the monastery, see Alexandru Ștefulescu, *Mănastirea Tismana* (Bucharest: Arte grafice Carol Göbl, 1909).

Mircea the Old, a voivode of Wallachia (1346–1418) was the patron for this epitaphios.¹⁴² That assumption is based on the fact that Mircea the Old was the founder of Cozia monastery. Although this is logical, and the date on the epitaphios (1395/6) falls within Mircea's reign, without a dedication embroidered on the epitaphios any attribution to a particular patron must remain speculative.

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¹⁴² Spiridon Cegăneanu, *Obiecte bisericești studiate și descrise* (Bucharest: Muzeul Național de Antichități, secțiunea ecleziastică, 1911), 57; Victoria Gheorghiuță and Marina Vazaca, eds., *Romanian Medieval Art* (Bucharest: The National Museum of Art of Romania, 2002), 18.

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16a and 16b. (Figures 32–35)

The “Vatican Epitaphioi.”

14th to 15th centuries.

No longer extant?

Both of these objects are known only through a work by Giacomo Grimaldi preserved in six manuscript copies.¹⁴³

When Pope Paul V cleared away the last of old St. Peter’s, the early Christian basilica that had been standing since the fourth century, Giacomo Grimaldi was charged with documenting what remained of the old structure.¹⁴⁴ The oratory of Pope John VII survived until 1606, and Grimaldi provided a detailed description in two works. The second part of his description of the oratory, *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veratione asservatis*, survives in six manuscript copies, some made by copyists after 1623, the year of Grimaldi’s death.¹⁴⁵ Two of the images that accompany the text are of interest to scholars of Byzantine textiles (figures 32–35). Both show the figure of Christ Amnos. One was almost certainly an aër-epitaphios (figures 34–35). The nature of the other object (figures 32–33) is less clear, but Demetrios Pallas suggested that it, too,

¹⁴³ Giacomo Grimaldi. *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veratione asservatis*. Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 (1618); Florence Bib. Naz. II-III-173 (1620); Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf. (1621); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 8404 (1628); Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 6439 (1635); Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 bis (posthumous).

¹⁴⁴ Giacomo Grimaldi, *Descrizione della basilica antica di S. Pietro in Vaticano: Codice Barberini latino 2733*, ed. R. Niggl (Vatican City, 1972), 148; Ann van Dijk, “Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople: The Peter Cycle in the Oratory of Pope John VII (705–707),” *DOP* 55 (2001): 305.

¹⁴⁵ J. Croquison, “Un Precieux monument d’art byzantin de l’ancien Trésor de Saint-Pierre: L’«Ombelle de Jean VII»,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 43, no. 1–4 (1967): 51–52.

had been an epitaphios.¹⁴⁶ This seems unlikely, given the iconography of the whole object and the description that Grimaldi provided. Because they are very different from each other, and because I believe that only one was an epitaphios, the two objects recorded by Grimaldi are discussed separately here.

16 a. The “umbrella” of the Veronica ciborium.
Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 8404 (figure 32).
Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., f. 121r (figure 33).

This object does bear the iconography of the amnos, iconography that we would expect to find on a thirteenth-century or fourteenth-century epitaphios, but the function of this object appears to have been quite different. In an article in 1900 Eugène Müntz tackled the question of what exactly the object might have been.¹⁴⁷ Müntz noted that Grimaldi described in his text an embroidered cloth, with silver and gold, which Grimaldi referred to as the “umbrella” of the Ciborium of the Veronica.¹⁴⁸ Müntz proposed that the embroidery in question dated from the time of John VII (705–708), because of the association with the oratory of John VII, but this is almost certainly incorrect, and the ciborium that Grimaldi saw had been constructed in the late twelfth century under Celestine III (1191–1198).¹⁴⁹ We might consider 1191 the *terminus post quem* for the “umbrella,” and 1606 is the *terminus ante quem*, but the iconography suggests that this object was made during the fourteenth century.

Just what an “umbrella” might be Müntz did not adequately explain, but J.

¹⁴⁶ Pallas refers to the object illustrated on Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., f. 121r as Vatican 1. Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 801.

¹⁴⁷ Eugène Müntz, “Une Broderie inédite exécutée pour le pape Jean VII 705–708,” *Revue de l’Art chrétien* 43 (1900), 18–21.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 19.

¹⁴⁹ Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 56.

Croquison proposed that it would have been a cloth that draped over the balustrade of the ciborium.¹⁵⁰ Again, as in the association of the Mandylion with the aër on the Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia (catalogue number 14, figure 29), the amnos iconography is associated with an acheiropoietos. The relic in question was the so-called Veronica or Sudarium, a veil with a miraculous face of Christ, similar to the Mandylion. The legend of the Veronica derives from the apocryphal Acts of Pilate.¹⁵¹ The “umbrella” was an embroidered cloth associated with the ciborium of the relic, but how the “umbrella” was displayed or used is unclear. It was not, in any case, an aër-epitaphios.

Grimaldi’s description is fairly specific, but his explanation of its function is enigmatic.

Haec antiquissima et nobilissima umbella tota auro et argento ditissimo opere texta, auroque plenissima, ob summam vestutatem admirabilis, longa palmis undecim, et lata palmis septem semis, ut dictum est, supra fenestram ciborii sacrosancti Sudarii Veronicæ extendebatur, dum populo ex ipsius ciborii moeniano ipsa sacratiss(im)a Reliquia ostendebatur.

(This most ancient and renowned *umbella* all in the richest gold and silver textile-work, and filled with gold, the most wonderful of vestments, eleven palms long and seven-and-a-half palms wide, so it is said, was spread out above the window of the ciborium of the sacred Sudarium of Veronica, while this most sacred relic was shown to the people from the same walled ciborium.)¹⁵²

This passage leaves open to interpretation just how, or on what part of the ciborium, the textile was displayed. The word “umbella,” the Latin word from which the English “umbrella” derives, has proven oddly difficult to interpret. Was the cloth hung like a curtain in the opening of the ciborium, or was it draped over the roof of the ciborium? If the cloth was meant to be draped over the roof, the images embroidered on the cloth

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.: 62.

¹⁵¹ Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 215.

¹⁵² Professor Diane Reilly helped me with this translation. The passage is from Bibl. Vat. Arch. S. Pietro, H3, f. 137r. Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 106.

could be seen only from above. If the cloth hung like a curtain in some part of the ciborium, then some of the images would have been upside down. Was the roof an open frame with the embroidered side of the cloth facing down? That is another possibility that fits the word “umbrella,” but is perhaps an unlikely position in which to find “the most wonderful of all vestments.” Grimaldi’s illustration of the ciborium, as he found it in the seventeenth century (figure 165), seems to contradict the possibility that the “umbrella” was draped over the ciborium.¹⁵³ It is difficult to determine from this illustration just how the “umbrella” might have been displayed in or on the ciborium.

Croquison proposes that the ciborium of Veronica was a reliquary shrine of a medieval Roman type.¹⁵⁴ The only extant medieval example of this type of reliquary shrine is in S. Giovanni in Laterano.¹⁵⁵ The reliquary shrine of the Veronica described by Grimaldi consisted of an altar with a chamber containing the relic above it. The chamber was enclosed behind a metal grill. A balustrade surrounded the chamber containing the relic. These features are discernable in Grimaldi’s drawing of the ciborium. The relic would be displayed above this balustrade, as depicted in woodcuts of 1481 and 1511 (figures 166 and 167).¹⁵⁶ It was this display, or ostension, of the relic that determined the design of the ciborium. Croquison proposes that the “umbrella” was deployed over the balustrade, just as a simulacrum of the Turin Shroud would be displayed on the front of

¹⁵³ Grimaldi’s drawing of the ciborium comes from Archivio di San Pietro H3, f. 34.

¹⁵⁴ Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 53–62.

¹⁵⁵ Brendan Cassidy, “Orcagna’s Tabernacle in Florence: Design and Function,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 55, no. 2 (1992): 188; John Beldon Scott, “Seeing the Shroud: Guarini’s Reliquary Chapel in Turin and the Ostension of a Dynastic Relic” *Art Bulletin* 77, no. 4 (December 1995): 626 and note 42.

¹⁵⁶ Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 57–59; Scott, “Seeing the Shroud,” 626.

the reliquary shrine of the Sindon in Turin.¹⁵⁷

This suggestion is plausible, but it is not the only possible explanation for how the Veronica “umbrella” was deployed. Assuming that a palm was approximately twenty-five centimeters, Croquison calculated the size of the Veronica “umbrella” as 2.75 x 1.9 meters.¹⁵⁸ If we judge by the ratios of the parts of the “umbrella” to one another in Grimaldi’s drawing, we can assume that the object or space to be covered by the draping sides was about a meter high. The object covered might have been the balustrade, but it is also possible that the “umbrella” was draped over the reliquary chamber itself, one side of the “umbrella” hanging down to cover the metal grill. It is sufficient for the present study to understand that the “umbrella” was meant to be displayed on the ciborium of the Sudarium and was never intended for use in the performance of the liturgy.

The iconography of Christ Amnos takes up only a small portion of the whole. The rest of the scenes are oriented as though the sides of the cloth were meant to be draped over another object. The top of each scene points toward the center of the whole textile so that each scene would be upright if the sides of the cloth were to hang over the edges of an object covered by the cloth. The central part is taken up by the figure of the dead Christ with three angel-deacons above. Next to the figure of Christ, on the slab or shroud, are the lance and the sponge. These were not illustrated on any aër-epitaphios before the sixteenth century. At either end of the central panel are the evangelist symbols. Between the evangelist symbols at the head of Christ is the hetoimasia, with the Theotokos at the feet of Christ. The abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ) appears next to the cruciform halo around Christ’s head. This central area of the “umbrella” comprises all the essential parts

¹⁵⁷ Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 62; Scott, “Seeing the Shroud,” 626.

¹⁵⁸ Croquison, “Un Precieux monument,” 53.

of the iconography typical of the aër, but the cloth as a whole also includes scenes from the life of Christ and portraits of saints. Grimaldi's drawing is numbered, but some manuscripts are more detailed than others: Vat. lat. 8404 is labeled and numbered.¹⁵⁹

Because of the narrative scenes on the "umbrella," Croquison compared the Vatican embroidery to the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios 1 (catalogue number 6, figure 17).¹⁶⁰ The scenes from the life of Christ represented on the "umbrella" are all represented in the border of the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios. The narrow border of the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios is a later addition, however, and probably not part of the original aër, which is only the central panel of the whole as we now have it. The form of the "umbrella"—the large narrative scenes surrounding a relatively small area depicting the amnos—makes sense given possible function of the "umbrella" as a cloth to be draped over another object. The association of the Sudarium of Veronica with the iconography of Christ as Amnos is noteworthy, but the Vatican "umbrella" itself was not an aër or an epitaphios.

16 b. The Vatican Aër-Epitaphios.

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Arch. S. Pietro H. 3 (figure 34).

¹⁵⁹ Croquison also provided a labeled diagram. The Theotokos is number 1. Proceeding clockwise around the border, number 2 is the symbol for Luke; number 3 is a seraph; number 4 is John Chrysostom; number 5 is Nicholas; number 6 is Euplius; number 7 is James; number 8 is Simon; number 9 is the prophet Solomon; number 10 is Andrew; number 11 is Thomas; number 12 Stephen the Protomartyr; number 13 is Gregory the Theologian; number 14 is Basil; number 13 is a seraph; number 16 is Mark; number 17 is the hetoimasia; number 18 is John; number 19 is a seraph; number 20 is Peter of Alexandria; number 21 is Cyril; number 22 is Antipas; number 23 is Philip; number 24 is Paul; number 25 is David; number 26 is Peter; number 27 is Bartholomew; number 28 is Spiridion; number 29 is Amphilochius; number 30 is Athanasius; number 31 is a seraph. The four scenes in the panel on Christ's right are the Annunciation (number 37 in Grimaldi's drawing), the Nativity (number 38), the Presentation in the Temple (number 35), and the Baptism (number 39). The four scenes in the area to Christ's left (next to the angel-deacons) are the Transfiguration (number 33), the Entry into Jerusalem (40), the Crucifixion (number 41), and the Resurrection (number 34). Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.: 73–74.

Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., fol. 123r (figure 35).

Demetrios Pallas referred to the object illustrated on folio 123r of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana copy of Grimaldi's book as "Vatican 2" among the epitaphioi he listed in the *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst*.¹⁶¹ Pallas was not the first scholar to consider this a drawing of an epitaphios, but some scholars have also identified the Vatican Aër-Epitaphios with the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes (catalogue number 21—figures 41–42), which is now in Victoria and Albert Museum, London.¹⁶² Pallas correctly treats them as separate objects. The confusion is understandable because the epitaphios in Grimaldi's drawing does resemble the embroidery in London, but the Vatican and London epitaphioi are not one and the same cloth. The aër-epitaphios in London has a border inscription with a dedication and the hymn "Noble Joseph," which Grimaldi might have been expected to report. The aër-epitaphios in London does not have the name of Christ or the title Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος Θρήνος embroidered anywhere on its surface. Grimaldi's drawing shows both. Other reasons to believe that these are separate objects are discussed in the entry for the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas, Son of Eudaimonoioannes (catalogue number 21).

Like the aër-epitaphios in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Vatican Aër-Epitaphios seems to have had a simple design with the figure of Christ on the Stone of Unction, rather than the shroud, flanked by two angel-deacons facing the center of the composition and holding two rhipidia each, one in each hand. The rest of the surface

¹⁶¹ Pallas, "Der Epitaphios," 791.

¹⁶² Hero Granger-Taylor, "Epitaphios of Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes," in *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture from British Collections* (Edited by David Buckton. London: The British Museum Press, 1994), 212; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89.

seems to have been embroidered with a repeated star motif. Between the angel-deacons in the Grimaldi drawings Christ's name is either spelled out (as in Arch. S. Pietro H. 3 [figure 34]) or abbreviated ΙΣ ΧΣ (as in Cod. Ambros. A168, fol. 123r [figure 35]), followed by the title Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος Θρήνος (The Epitaphios Threnos). Grimaldi recorded another inscription, but where that inscription was embroidered on the textile is difficult to determine from Grimaldi's drawing. It seems to have been within the central composition rather than around a border. This arrangement would not be unusual, but it is very different from the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes. Grimaldi records the Greek inscription in the drawings of the textile:

Κύριε σωτήρ μου ἐξόδιον ὕμνον καὶ ἐπιτάφιον ὠδήν σοι ἄσομεν τῷ τῇ ταφῇ σου
ζωῆς μου τας εἰσόδους διανοίξαντι καὶ θανάτῳ θάνατον καὶ ἄδην θανατώσαντι

(O Lord, my savior, I sing a hymn for the departed and a burial ode to you who, through your tomb, have opened for me the entrance to life, and by your death have put death and hell to death).

This is part of a canticle from Holy Saturday Orthros.¹⁶³ There is no other inscription recorded by Grimaldi, neither a dedication nor an inscription of the memorial formula found on examples such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). The inscription associates the textile with Holy Saturday, because the canticle it refers to is associated with the Holy Saturday Orthros. This seems to indicate that this textile was intended to be used as an epitaphios. That would be a reason to date this embroidery to the fifteenth or sixteenth century rather than earlier. The sentiment expressed in the inscription, and the iconography, would be just as appropriate for the function of an aër. Regardless of its intended function, we cannot date this object securely with only the inscription and the iconography to guide us.

¹⁶³ Ekklesia tes Ellados, *The Lenten Triodion*, 646.

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17. (Figure 36)
Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia.¹⁶⁴
170 x 111 cm.
Ca. 1405.
Putna Monastery, Romania.¹⁶⁵

The treasury of the Putna monastery is home to one of the largest and most important collections of medieval embroideries.¹⁶⁶ Most are Romanian and many date to the era of Ștefan cel Mare, but one example is Serbian and dates to the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is one of the earliest extant examples of a type that also includes the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heraclea, from the Studenica Monastery (catalogue number 18, which is the only other member of Millet's group 1d) and the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți (catalogue number 30).¹⁶⁷ The iconography is similar to that of the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 7, figure 19) in that the figure of Christ is shown in semi-profile without any shroud or stone, as though the very fabric of the epitaphios itself is the shroud. The abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ appears just above the left shoulder of Christ. Unlike the Vatopedi Aër-Epitaphios, there is no question about the orientation of the composition.

The color scheme is a nearly monochromatic palette dominated by yellow and gold. All figures and inscriptions are arranged so that the long side on the right hand of

¹⁶⁴ I saw this textile at the Putna Monastery Museum in July 2005. As discussed in this essay, the title I have assigned to this object is possibly misleading. It would probably be more correct to refer to it as the "Aër-Epitaphios of Euphemelia and the Daughter of Eupraxia." Pauline Johnstone referred to it as "The epitaphios of Euphemelia [sic] and Eupraxia." The use of both names (Ephemelia and Eupraxia) in referring to this object is an established convention that I will follow only for practical reasons. Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, figure 97.

¹⁶⁵ Oreste Tafrali listed this embroidery in his catalog of the Putna treasury as Putna 64. Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*.

¹⁶⁶ See also the Putna Monastery's website <http://www.putna.ro/arta/epitafuri-eng.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 99–102.

Christ is seen at the bottom. Around the figure of Christ are twelve angels. In each corner of the composition is an angel-deacon with a rhipidion. Each rhipidion is embroidered with the trisagion (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ). Above the figure of Christ, at the top of the composition is a pair of mourning angels holding kerchiefs, or the sleeves of their robes, to their faces. Flanking them are two more angels. Their bodies face out from the center of the composition, but their faces are turned back toward the middle. They gesture with their hands held up, palms out, which reads here as a gesture of lamentation rather than as a simple orant pose. These four angels appear to illustrate the inscription between them and the body of Christ: +ΞΕΝΟΝ ΒΛΕΠΩΝ ΘΕΑ/ΜΑ ΔΗΜΟΣ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ ΑΙΝΟΝ ΞΕΝΟΝ ΚΕΚΡΑΓΕ ΗΩ ΘΥ ΛΟΓΕ (Seeing the strange sight, the host of angels uttered an unaccustomed cry of anguish, O Son of God, Word).¹⁶⁸ This is from a troparion for the Holy Saturday Orthros.

Below the figure of Christ are four more angels, arranged symmetrically but posed individually with gestures of lamentation. The effect is dramatic, or theatrical, as in the mourning angels on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10). The evangelists, in either symbols or portraits, are absent. The rest of the space is filled with an eight-pointed, flower-like star-motif. Around the border is a decorative pattern that alternates flower-stars with crosses, a seraph in each corner of the border. At the bottom of the central panel, just above the border, is a second inscription, a memorial dedication:

+ΜΝΗΣΘΕΤΟΙ ΚΕ ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΔΟΥΛΩΝ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΙΣΙΣ /
ΣΕΡΒΙΑΣ ΕΦΗΜΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΗΣ ΣΥΝ ΘΥΓΑΤΡΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣΗΣ ΣΕΡΩΙΑΣ

¹⁶⁸ Tafrali's transcription is more carefully observed than Millet's. Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 32; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 100.

ΕΥΠΡΑΞΙΑΣ ΜΟΝΑΧΗΣ

If we follow the same word order, this inscription translates roughly as “Remember O Lord the soul of your servant the empress of Serbia Ephemia the nun with the daughter of the queen of Serbia the nun Eupraxia.” If we take case endings into account, a more accurate translation would be “Remember, O Lord, the soul of your servant the empress of Serbia the nun Ephemia, with the daughter of the nun Eupraxia (who is) the queen of Serbia.” The grammar, in other words, suggests that Eupraxia was the queen of Serbia, and she had a daughter. I have chosen to transliterate the first name embroidered on the epitaphios as “Ephemia” to reflect the Greek of the inscription, in turn a transliteration of her Slavic name. It is more commonly transliterated as Euphemia, but the Greek of the inscription is a phonetic transliteration of the Slavic name. I adopt the more widely used transliteration, “Jefimija,” when referring to the woman herself.

There is an extensive bibliography on the subject of this aër-epitaphios. This is due both to the high quality of this textile and to its presence among the embroideries in the treasury of the Putna Monastery. It is famous also because of its association with the nun Jefimija. Jefimija was the name taken by Jelena the widow of the despot of Serres Jovan Uglješa, brother of Vukašin Mrnjačević.¹⁶⁹ Whether Jefimija was the patron or she herself embroidered this epitaphios is a question that cannot be resolved. Her retirement to monastic life means that it is certainly plausible that she embroidered it. As Pauline Johnstone has pointed out, however, Jefimija’s duties as Milica’s companion may have left little time for embroidery.¹⁷⁰ The inscription on the Putna epitaphios attributed to her also mentions two other women—the queen of Serbia (the nun Eupraxia) and her

¹⁶⁹ Mirković, *Monahinja Jefimija*, 1–7; Janković, *The Nun Euphemia*.

¹⁷⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 59.

daughter (i.e. Eupraxia's daughter)—suggesting one of several possibilities: the names might simply indicate dual patronage; the names might record two embroiderers; or the names might identify the patron, Ephemelia, and the embroiderer.

According to Slobodan Mileusnić Jefimija took the monastic name Eupraxia near the end of her life.¹⁷¹ This could be taken to imply that Ephemelia and Eupraxia are identical, but the wording of the inscription seems clearly to differentiate the two women. Eupraxia was also a common name for women taking monastic vows. The titles of the women seem to make their relationship more explicit than do the names. “Ephemelia” or Jefimija, as widow of John Uglješa and daughter of Caesar Vojhna, is identified by the honorific *kaisarissa* (empress), and Eupraxia is identified as *basileissa* (queen). This seems to indicate that Eupraxia might have been Milica herself.¹⁷² The formula of the dedication, if we follow the argument proposed by Svetislav Mandić, suggests that either Ephemelia or both women were dead when the embroidery was made.¹⁷³ That would put the date no earlier than 1405, but it excludes the possibility that Jefimija embroidered it herself. Jefimija could have embroidered her own memorial epitaphios before her death, however, which means that we can date this embroidery to no more precise a period than sometime between ca. 1389 and ca. 1405.

How and when the aër-epitaphios came into the treasury at Putna are questions we cannot answer. That the inscription is in Greek is also puzzling, since Church Slavonic was used on the other embroideries associated with Jefimija. Any answer to these questions can result only from speculation. Perhaps the aër-epitaphios was intended as a

¹⁷¹ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 320.

¹⁷² Mirković, *Monahinja Jefimija*, 32.

¹⁷³ Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 65–80.

gift to a monastery in Greek-speaking territory. Perhaps Serbian refugees from the Turks took it with them to Putna, as Johnstone suggests.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps it was taken from Serbia by monks who came from Bucovina, which is the theory offered by Dušan Janković.¹⁷⁵ No matter how the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia got to Putna, which was founded in 1466, it seems to have arrived in Moldavia by 1427. Unless we hypothesize a common source for textiles of this iconographic type, then the iconography of the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 26, figure 47) suggests that the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia had a direct and immediate effect on Moldavian embroidery. If the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia was the source for this type of iconography in Moldavia, then later examples, such as the 1638 Epitaphios of Vasile Lupu (figure 168), reveal that the influence of “Ephemelia” would last beyond the end of the fifteenth century.

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¹⁷⁴ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 85.

¹⁷⁵ Janković, *The Nun Euphemelia*, n.p.

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18. (Figure 37)
Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia.
124 x 78 cm.
Ca. 1439.
Treasury of the Studenica Monastery, Serbia.

Gabriel Millet's Group 1d includes two very similar aër-epitaphioi: the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia, now in the Putna Monastery (catalogue number 17); and the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heraclea, now in the Studenica Monastery.¹⁷⁶ The aër-epitaphios at Studenica is probably more recent than the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia. Both have Greek inscriptions, which is not surprising in the case of the Studenica embroidery because of the association with Antonios of Heracleia, who is named in the dedication. The color scheme, iconography, and inscriptions are all very similar. It is possible that they are the products of a single workshop, but it is also possible that they both simply follow a style of the early fifteenth century.

Both textiles emphasize yellow and gold in the embroidery. The Studenica aër-epitaphios had a very dark silk background, however, but the original background is mostly missing except in the borders and around the inscriptions and around the edges of the figures. Red silk thread was used in the oraria, and green silk thread was used in the hair ribbons of the deacon-angels. Both colors occur in the decorative motifs around the border among gold-embroidered crosses and swastikas. The iconography of the two is very similar. Christ is shown in semi-profile without a shroud or slab. Four deacon-angels surround Christ, each with an orarion and a rhipidion. The orarion are embroidered with the trisagion (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ) in gold. A fifth angel occupies the center of the upper part of the composition. This angel gestures theatrically with its hands, but its face,

¹⁷⁶ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 99–102.

like the faces of all the angels on this textile, seems impassive. The angels are all rendered in a relatively naturalistic style that recalls the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10), but without the emotional expressiveness in the faces.

There is no decorative motif in the spaces around the figures. There are no evangelist symbols. Christ is not identified with the usual abbreviation. There is an inscription, however, including a dedicatory inscription divided into two parts. The first part appears between the border and the deacon-angel of the lower left. The second part appears between the border and the deacon-angel on the lower right: ΜΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ / ΚΕ ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΤΟΥ / ΔΟΥΛΟΥ / ΣΟΥ. // *ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΑΣ (Remember, O Lord, the soul of your servant Antonios of Heracleia). The second inscription appears in the space below Christ and between the lower pair of deacon-angels:

+ΩΣ Ο ΛΗΣΤΗΣ ΟΜΟΛΟΓΩ ΣΟΙ / ΜΝΗΣΘΕΤΙ ΜΟΥ ΚΕ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ
ΣΟΥ / ΑΜΗΝ ΛΕΓΩ ΣΟΙ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ ΜΕΤ' ΕΜΟΥ ΕΣΗ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΩ

(Like the robber I confess to you. Remember me, O Lord, in your kingdom.
Verily, I say to you today you will be with me in paradise).

This is a paraphrase of Luke 23:42–43. It is also the prototype of the sentiment expressed in the other inscription, which is similar to the memorial formula embroidered on several extant aër-epitaphioi beginning with the Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos II (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3).

Antonios of Heracleia is presumably the same Antonios, Metropolitan of Heracleia, who attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439). That is Lazar Mirković's suggestion.¹⁷⁷ The only reason to doubt this identification is the lack of a date on the aër-epitaphios. If Mirković was wrong, then the identity of the Antonios of

¹⁷⁷ Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 22–23.

Heracleia mentioned in the inscription is lost to us. Millet proposed a date for the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia in the second half of the fourteenth century, and Dobrila Stojanović followed this suggestion.¹⁷⁸ The Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia is so similar to the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia that Millet was able to speculate about a connection between them. He thought that Jefimija might have been responsible for bringing the Studenica embroidery to Serbia.¹⁷⁹ This is plausible, and it would explain how it got there. It also narrows the date range to the period between 1371, when Jefimija became a nun, and 1405, the year of Jefimija's death. It seems unlikely, however, that the Antonios of Heracleia named in the inscription was a different Antonios of Heracleia from the Metropolitan Antonios of Heracleia who attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence. If we accept Mirković's suggestion, then, and if we accept the theory that the dedication formula refers to a person who was already dead, then 1439 would be the earliest date possible.¹⁸⁰ For that reason, a date of around 1439 seems more reasonable than an earlier date. In that case, the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia is the earlier of the two and perhaps influenced the design of the aër-epitaphios at Studenica. The separate question of why the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia is now in the Studenica monastery probably cannot be answered.

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¹⁷⁸ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 99; Stojanović, "Vez," 324.

¹⁷⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 99.

¹⁸⁰ Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 22–23; Mandić, *Drevnik: zapisi konzervatora*, 71–72.

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19. (Figure 38)
Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos (Chilandar 2).¹⁸¹
176 x 140 cm.
Ca. 1400.
Chilandar Monastery, Mount Athos.

There are two epitaphioi in the Chilandar treasury that date to the period before the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. The first is the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje of ca. 1346 (catalogue number 6). The second is the Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos. For practical reasons, I will frequently refer to the Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos as “Chilandar 2.” Chilandar 2 presents several difficulties. Its inscriptions are quite long, but much of the embroidery of the inscriptions is damaged or lost. The disagreement among scholars over details of the inscriptions means that transcriptions can vary somewhat from one reading to another.¹⁸² While the inscriptions do provide two names, the identity of those persons (or one person, according to Millet) remains open to interpretation.¹⁸³ The iconography is relatively elaborate for the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. It includes the Virgin and John the Theologian, evangelist portraits, and several angels of various types. It also includes the cross, the sun, the moon, and concentric arcs representing heaven. These features do not appear on extant embroidered aër-epitaphioi in the fourteenth century, although these elements had all been used in wall paintings of the Epitaphios Threnos. Because of the iconography, some scholars assign

¹⁸¹ See <http://www.svluka.org/Chilandar/embroideries.htm>. I have not seen this example in person, and the available photographs are clear enough only to confirm that it would be necessary to examine this textile closely in order to verify or dispute what any given scholar has already written about it. The inscriptions, especially the badly damaged dedication, are difficult to read in photographs.

¹⁸² Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102–03; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 18–20; Mirković, “Dve Srpske plashtanitse,” 117–20; Vladimir R. Petković, ed. *Starine; zapisi, natpisi, listine* (Belgrade: Napredak, 1923), 18.

¹⁸³ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

Chilandar 2 to the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁴ Gabriel Millet listed this embroidery as the sole example of his group 2a.¹⁸⁵ Technically, the embroidery is well executed, but the style can be described as crude, with varying degrees of naturalism from one figure to another. The unusual treatment of the iconography and the difficulty of interpreting the inscription make Chilandar 2 hard to date.

Taking these problems one at time, the iconography is easily described. The ground for the embroidery is a red silk, which is worn away in a few areas around the inscriptions. The figure of Christ is embroidered in a light silk for the body, brown for the hair, blue for the loincloth. The hands of the figure are crossed over his navel. The cruciform nimbus is embroidered in gold, with at least two patterns of couching. Christ rests on a slab executed in an awkward isometric perspective. Behind the slab is a row of figures. From left to right they are the evangelist portrait of John, the Virgin, three mourning women (the myrrhophoroi), then John the Theologian, and the evangelist portrait of Mark. Most figures are embroidered in the same color of thread for faces with gold for the clothing. One of the myrrh-bearing women is embroidered with green silk for her robes, another with red silk. The virgin and John are posed with their right hands on their cheeks, a gesture of lamentation repeated by the myrrh-bearing woman in the center. Between the second and third of the myrrh-bearing women is the cross, which is embroidered in gold. On the left side of the cross is a representation of the moon. The sun is represented on the right side. Concentric arcs of blue silk represent heaven behind the top of the cross. At the top of the composition is a row of five mourning angels, three to the left of the cross, two to the right. Each is posed in an individualized gesture of

¹⁸⁴ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 266; Stojanović, “Vez,” 324–25.

¹⁸⁵ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

lamentation. Below the slab, from left to right, are a seraph, Luke, a throne, a seraph flanked by two more tiny seraphim, a throne, Mathew, and a seraph. There are no deacon-angels of the type found on the Cozia Aër-Epithaphios (catalogue number 15). The poses of the Virgin and John the Theologian, who stand behind the figure of Christ and face the left side of the composition, are similar to the figures on the Cozia Aër-Epithaphios, but the poses on Chilandar 2 are less extreme even though the figural style is more abstract.

Other than a repeated motif of small stars, the space around the figures is filled with several inscriptions. Some of the inscriptions are simply labels for the iconography, but much of the inscription is not as easy to discern or interpret. At the top, within the blue arcs of heaven and below the titulus, are the abbreviations ΙΣ (left of the cross) and ΧΣ (right of the cross). On either side of the cross, below the horizontal beam, is the title κрсть ѹстнѣ (the venerable cross). The figure holding an open book in the upper left, next to the halo around Christ's head, is identified as иѿо (John). The inscription in the open book held by John reads “ВѢ НА/УЕЛѢ / БѢ СЛО/ВО И / СЛОВО / БѢ КЪ... (In the beginning was the word and the word was with God...),” which is John 1:1. The figure of Mary is identified as мр ѿν (Meter Theou=Mother of God). John, above Christ's knees, is identified as ѿεѿλγ (Theologi, for John the Theologian). The evangelist portrait to the right of John the Theologian is identified as ἀποστѣ μαρκ (The Apostle Mark). The open book held by Mark in his evangelist portrait reads “(И) Ζαϋε/λο ιε/βανγ / ιν χβ(α) / сна / бжн(е) / ιαко/же ιе/сть / пнс... (The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...),” which is Mark 1:1. To the right of Mark is the word ΑΓΙΟΣ (Holy). Above the head of Christ and between the evangelist portrait of John and the figure of the

Virgin is the title of the iconography: $\kappa\eta\epsilon\theta\iota\ \sigma\ \kappa\epsilon\tau\alpha$ (Descent from the Cross). It is unusual that the scene would be identified as the Descent from the Cross (or Deposition) rather than either the Entombment or the Lamentation. The choice of title might have something to do with the inclusion of the cross in the iconography.

In the bottom zone, between the two lengthy inscriptions, the evangelist portrait of Luke, with a closed book, is identified as $\alpha\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\omega\ \lambda\delta\kappa\alpha$ (Apostle Luke). The inscription $\mu\eta\gamma\omicron\omega\upsilon\eta\tau\ \chi\rho\delta\beta\eta\mu\beta$ (many-eyed cherubim) appears between one set of linked, many-eyed, four-winged rings and the central group of three seraphim. This seems to conflate the usual iconography of linked, winged, many-eyed rings representing thrones with the iconography for cherubim, which are sometimes represented as four-winged figures with many eyes. See, for example, the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10) on which the three types of angel seem to be differentiated from one another. On the right side of the six-winged figure is the word $\mu\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\rho\lambda\alpha\tau$ ($\epsilon\zeta\alpha\pi\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\iota\varsigma$ =six-winged, i. e. the seraphim). The evangelist portrait of Matthew, the figure in the lower right corner, with a closed book, is identified as $\alpha\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\omicron\ \mu\alpha$ (Apostle Matthew).

The first of the two long inscriptions runs around the central group of figures. It begins next to the shoulder of the evangelist portrait of John, continues below the figure of Christ, curves up the right side where the orientation of the letters changes (the tops of the letters point toward the center of the composition), and breaks for a new line beginning just above the head of the evangelist portrait of Mark. It continues beneath the previous line, turns upward again, and ends between the portrait of Luke and the right edge of the epitaphios. In the following transcription, line breaks indicated with a slash (/)

as usual. I have used arrows (↑) to indicate the two points at which the text curves upward along the right side of the composition.

ВЕЛНУА/ЮМ ТЕ / ЖНВОДА/ВУЕ ХСЕ / Н ПОУА / ЮМЪ СТРАД/НИНА ТОВ/ІА УСТ/НАНА / Н
СЛАВНОЕ СЛАВНМЪ ПОГ(Р)ЕБЕННЕ: ВЕЛНУАЕМ ТЕ ЇСЕ ЦРОВ Н ПОУНТАЮМЪ
ПОГРЕ(БЕ)ННЕ Н СТРАСТН ТВОЕ НМНЖЕ ↑ СПЕ НЫ НЗЪ НСТАЉНИНА ЖНВОТЬ / ВЪ
ГРОБЪ ПОЛОЖИ СЕ ХЕ Н АНГЉЬСКА ВРНЬСТВА ДНВАІАХЃ СЕ СЪХОЖДЕННЕ ↑ ТВОЕ
СЛАВЕЦЕ ВІАКА ВСѢХЪ ЗРИ [СЕ]...

(We magnify you, who gave your life, O Christ, and we worship your venerable passion and we glorify your glorious burial. We magnify you, Jesus, O King, and we honor your entombment and suffering, which saves us from destruction. In a tomb they laid you, O Christ the life, and the angelic hosts were overcome with awe, and glorified your condescension. The master of all, behold...).

The various parts of this inscription appear in the liturgy of Holy Saturday Orthros, which may explain the choice of these passages for inclusion on this textile, but that assumes that this embroidered textile was always intended for use as an epitaphios rather than as an aër.¹⁸⁶

The rest of the inscription is the dedication, a lengthy text in the lower zone around and between the portraits of Mark and Matthew. This inscription near the bottom is so damaged, with embroidery worn away and parts of the fabric missing, that I cannot transcribe it from photographs. Not only is a transcription is very difficult, but interpretations of the text, such as Gabriel Millet's and Lazar Mirković's, can be very different.¹⁸⁷ I have attempted to reconstruct the inscription by consulting Vladimir Petković's transcription, Gabriel Millet's transliterated transcription, and Lazar Mirković's interpretation, as well as photographs of the embroidery itself.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 19.

¹⁸⁷ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102–03; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 18–20.

¹⁸⁸ Millet's photographic archive number is K 8444. Petković, ed. *Starine; zapisi, natpisi, listine*, 18; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102–03; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 18–20.

ГѢ БѢ НАШЬ ПРИЕМН ЛАРЫ / АВЕЛОВИ ДАРИ И ПОЮВЫ И АРОНОВЫ И
 ЗАХАРІИНЫ И / САМОНЛОВЫ И ВСѢХЪ СѢНХЪ ТВОИХЪ ТАКО И ОТ(Ь) РѢКѢ МЕНЕ
 ГРѢШНАГО ІОАНЪ / ПРИМИ ПРИЕОЩЕНІЕ СЕ ВЪ ВОИЮ БЛАГОУХАНЬНЪ И ВЪ ЧѢСТЬ
 И СЛАВѢ / АРХИСТРАТИГА [МИХАИЛА И ѿ]ЦА НАШЕГО ГВРНА / ПѢСТНОЖИТЕЛѢ
 ЗА ОСТАВЛЕНІЕ ГРѢХОМЪ (МО)ИХЪ. РѢКА ГРѢШНАГО СЯРОПЛА.

(O Lord our God who received the gifts of Abel, Noah, Aaron, Zachariah, Samuel, and all the saints, so from my hands, those of the sinner John, accept this offering, as a sweet perfume, and to the honor and glory of the Archistrategos [Michael and] our [Father] Gabriel the hermit for the remission of my sins. The hand of the sinner Syropoulos.)

Millet's transliterated hypothesis for the missing section is slightly different: [Michaila i prepodobnago o].¹⁸⁹ This changes the sense to "...Archistrategos [Michael and] our [beloved Father] Gabriel the hermit..." Mirković's and Millet's respective interpretations of this inscription result in very different proposed dates for this embroidery. We have two names, John (or Jovan) and Syropoulos, and at least one of these names was the donor. Lazar Mirković argued persuasively that John was Despot Jovan Oliver who founded the Lesnovo monastery in 1341.¹⁹⁰ That leaves "Syropoulos" as the name of the embroiderer. The mention of Archangel Michael supports Mirković's argument since Lesnovo was dedicated to Michael.¹⁹¹ This suggests that Jovan Oliver made this donation shortly after 1341, although the donation could have been made at any time after the founding of the Lesnovo monastery and up to his death sometime after 1355.¹⁹² Arguing from epigraphic evidence from the monastery itself Mirković suggests that 1346 is the likely date for the gift of this aër-epitaphios.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

¹⁹⁰ Mirković, "Dve Srpske plashtanitse," 119; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 19.

¹⁹¹ Ljubomir Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi* (Belgrade: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1986. Original publication 1923), 7.

¹⁹² Alexander Kazhdan, "Oliver, Jovan," in *ODB*, vol. 3, 1523.

¹⁹³ Mirković, "Dve Srpske plashtanitse," 119–20; Mirković, *Church Embroidery*, 19–20.

As convincing as Mirković's argument may be, Gabriel Millet offered an alternative theory. Millet assumed that the names John and Syropoulos in the inscription on Chilandar 2 refer to the same person, John Syropoulos, whom he identified as an official who signed an act of the patriarch in 1396/7.¹⁹⁴ The inscription on the aër-epitaphios, however, seems to make a distinction between John and Syropoulos, so Millet's argument is not as persuasive as Mirković's argument. Pauline Johnstone disputed Millet's interpretation of the border inscription and, therefore, the date that Millet suggested, but Johnstone had reservations about dating this embroidery as early as 1346.¹⁹⁵ In this case I agree with Pauline Johnstone because neither the iconography nor the figural style of this embroidery is similar to the iconography or style of any other aër-epitaphios of the mid-fourteenth century.

Style, however, can be quite variable from one time and place to another. Variations in style can occur within a single embroidery, as we see in Chilandar 2 when we contrast the faces of the myrrophoroi with the faces of the evangelist portraits. More important than the somewhat crude or simplified figural style is the highly developed iconography, which includes the myrrh-bearing women as well as the Virgin and John the Theologian, seems to be a step on the way toward the fully developed Epitaphios Threnos iconography characteristic of the sixteenth century. For that reason alone, I hesitate to date this embroidery any earlier than ca. 1400. It is possible, of course, that the iconography of Chilandar 2 is simply anomalous, a mid-fourteenth-century example of iconography more characteristic of aër-epitaphioi of the fifteenth century and after.

¹⁹⁴ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

¹⁹⁵ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 80.

Nevertheless, this aër-epitaphios must remain a puzzle unless a dated example featuring similar iconography and similar figural styles can be found.

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20. (Figures 39–40)

Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I, from the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery.

187 x 140 cm.

1389–1425.

State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg (ДРТ 281).

The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I is the earliest surviving example of a group of embroidered aër-epitaphioi associated with the grand princes of Moscow in the fifteenth century. In their iconography, these aër-epitaphioi are a distinct type. Other examples of this type, with varying degrees of similarity to Basil I's, are the Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity (catalogue number 22), the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23), an aër-epitaphios in Novgorod (catalogue number 24), the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia in Novgorod (catalogue number 34), an aër-epitaphios in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35), and the Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin also now in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 37). The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I is associated with Moscow because of its probable patron, but some scholars have associated it with Novgorod.¹⁹⁶ The aër-epitaphioi in this group share certain features, but a few of them were heavily restored even to the point of removing figures from their original backing and assembling them as appliqués on a new backing. This is the case with the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I of which only the figures and a few of the decorative elements have been preserved.

According to Liudmila Likhacheva, the Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I

¹⁹⁶ Both A. N. Svirin and V. N. Lazarev placed this among Novgorodian examples. Viktor Nikitich Lazarev, "Die Malerei und die Skulptur Nowgorods," in *Geschichte Der Russischen Kunst*, ed. Igor Emmanuilovich Grabar, W.N. Lazarew, and W.S. Kemenow (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1958), 55–206; Viktor Nikitich Lazarev, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1947); Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 29–40.

was reworked in 1645.¹⁹⁷ Prince Ivan Andreevich Golitsyn had a new border with an inscription added to record a donation to the monastery. These additions were later removed. The figures were removed from the original backing in the 1830s. A further restoration took place, and the added border and inscription were removed, when the aër-epitaphios came into the collection of the State Russian Museum in 1923. Published photographs reveal another change in the backing cloth on which the surviving parts of the original embroidery were mounted. The change must have been made after 1923. The cloth was once of a light color with a woven pattern, but it is now blue linen with no pattern (see figures 39 and 40).¹⁹⁸ The border and any dedicatory inscription have been lost, if such things were part of the original state of this textile. Although the dedicatory inscription no longer exists, inventories of the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery of 1773–74 and 1802 appear to record the opening of the dedication: “This cloth was created by the true believer Grand Prince Vasiliï.”¹⁹⁹

The surviving parts of this aër-epitaphios include the evangelist symbols in the corners, Matthew in the upper right, Luke in the lower right, Mark in the lower left, and

¹⁹⁷ Izilla I. Pleshanova and Liudmila D. Likhacheva, *Drevnerusskoe dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo russkogo muzeia [Old Russian Decorative and Applied Art in the Collection of the Russian Museum]* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1985), 204; Roderick Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery: The Art of Holy Russia* (Catalog of an exhibition at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Fort Worth: InterCultura, 1994), 252; Carlo Pirovano, *Arte e sacro mistero: tesori dal Museo russo di San Pietroburgo* (Milan: Electa, 2000), 188.

¹⁹⁸ Compare photographs published by V.N. Lazarev in 1947 (figure 39) and 1958 and those published since the 1980s (figure 40). Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery*, 253; Lazarev, “Die Malerei und die Skulptur Nowgorods,” 205; Lazarev, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda*, plate 130; Liudmila D. Likhacheva, “Kentemata,” in *Oi Pyle tou Misteriou*, ed. Manoles Borboudakes (Athens: Choregos, 1994), figure 56; Pirovano, *Arte e sacro mistero*, 189–93; Pleshanova and Likhacheva, *Drevnerusskoe dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo*, figures 86–87.

¹⁹⁹ Pleshanova and Likhacheva, *Drevnerusskoe dekorativno-prikladnoe iskusstvo*, 204; Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery*, 252; Pirovano, *Arte e sacro mistero*, 188.

John in the upper left. The sun and moon appear at the top with two mourning angels. The figure of Christ on a shroud occupies the center of the composition with the Virgin embracing his head on the left, and John holding Christ's feet at the right. Above the abdomen of Christ is a ciborium with a lamp. The initials ΙΣ ΧΣ are embroidered within the ciborium. Four deacon-angels are arranged symmetrically, two on either side of the ciborium. The two near the center of the composition hold rhipidia with six-winged figures. The two at the sides hold rhipidia with the words ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ. Below the figure of Christ are two more angels with rhipidia. These angels flank a triangular space filled with stars and a six-winged figure. The figures are richly embroidered with gold. Non-metallic thread is used only for the body of Christ, for the faces, hair, and hands of the other figures, and for details such as the decorations on sleeves and collars of the angels. The inscription that mentioned Grand Prince Vasilii possibly would have filled the triangular space between the angels at the bottom. If the current state faithfully recreates the original arrangement, however, that triangular space was instead filled with stars and a seraph. The dedicatory inscription might have been elsewhere within the central panel, or it might have been part of the border. "Vasilii" was presumably Basil I. If this is indeed the same textile as that described in the inventories, and the inventories did not record whether the inscription included a date, then we can date it to a period only as precise as 1389–1425, the period of Grand Prince Basil I.

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21. (Figures 41–42)

Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes.²⁰⁰

140 x 85 cm.

1406/7.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Textiles and Dress Collection, 8278–1863).

In 1756 Gaetano Maria Capece, under his Latinized name Cajetanus M. Capycius, published *De vestusto altaris pallio ecclesiae graecae christianorum ex cimeliarchio clericorum regularium theatinorum domus SS. Apoltolorum Neapolis: Diatriba*, in which he described a textile he saw in the Santi Apostoli Monastery in Naples.²⁰¹ What he saw was something he described as an altar cloth that had come to Naples from “Calatina” in Sicily.²⁰² “Calatina,” or Calata, has never been positively identified, but an inventory in Naples records that this textile had come from Sicily to Naples in 1628.²⁰³ Fortunately Capece provided a detailed engraving and thorough description so that there is no doubt that the object he saw was the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes mentioned in the dedication is very likely the diplomat of that name who was a prominent member of the Eudaimonoioannes family in the Morea.²⁰⁴

This aër-epitaphios was mentioned in the nineteenth century in *La messe: études archéologiques sur ses monuments* by Charles Rohault de Fleury, who provided another

²⁰⁰ I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

²⁰¹ Cajetanus M. [Gaetano Maria Capece]. Capycius, *De vestusto altaris pallio ecclesiae graecae christianorum ex cimeliarchio clericorum regularium theatinorum domus SS. Apoltolorum Neapolis: Diatriba* (Naples: Valentinus Azzolinus, 1756).

²⁰² Ibid., 10.

²⁰³ Ibid., 11; Charles Rohault de Fleury and Georges Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe: études archéologiques sur ses monuments*, 8 vols., vol. 5 (Paris, 1883–1889), 45.

²⁰⁴ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 121.

engraving based on the one in Capece's *Diatriba*.²⁰⁵ Fleury was apparently working from Capece's engraving and description, and he thought this textile was an antimimension. After Capece's publication, there are no further records of this embroidery's whereabouts until the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) bought it from Canon Franz Bock in 1863.²⁰⁶ It has since been thoroughly studied, published many times, and sometimes mistaken for something it is not.

Gabriel Millet included the aër-epitaphios at the Victoria and Albert Museum in his group 1b with the aër-epitaphioi from Ohrid (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), Sofia (catalogue number 11, figure 24), and Venice (catalogue number 12, figure 25).²⁰⁷ This group consists of the those examples that bear some of the simplest iconography, with only the figure of Christ lying on the slab or shroud in the center, with deacon-angels holding rhipidia standing over or behind Christ. These examples also have the evangelists in the corners, although the Victoria and Albert embroidery features evangelist portraits rather than symbols, which makes this example different from the other members of Millet's group 1b. Unfortunately, Millet also identified this aër-epitaphios with one of the textiles recorded by Giacomo Grimaldi in the seventeenth century, specifically citing Cod. Ambros. 168, folio 123 (catalogue number 16b, figure 35).²⁰⁸ The temptation to identify the Victoria and Albert textile with the Vatican textile is understandable. If they were identical, it would resolve the question of what happened to the aër-epitaphios that Grimaldi recorded.

²⁰⁵ Fleury and Fleury, *La Messe*, 45.

²⁰⁶ Granger-Taylor, "Epitaphios of Nicholas Eudaimonoionnes," 211.

²⁰⁷ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89–94.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

Grimaldi was too careful an observer to have recorded the inscription incorrectly, or to have so badly imitated the pattern of decorative motifs, or to have omitted the evangelist portraits altogether. Grimaldi's drawing shows four rhipidia, one in each of the angels' hands. He records an inscription within the central panel, but he did not record a border inscription. This is the very opposite of what we find on the aër-epitaphios at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The inscription that Grimaldi did record is quite different from the one on the Victoria and Albert embroidery. Millet's identification of the epitaphios at the Victoria and Albert Museum with the epitaphios described by Grimaldi has been repeated by other scholars, even the most eminent, and even as recently as a catalogue entry by Hero Granger-Taylor in 1994.²⁰⁹ I believe that these are two separate but similar objects.

Although the iconography of the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes is very similar to the others in Millet's group 1b, there are a few differences. The angels, for example, are full-length figures that stand at either end of the figure of Christ rather than behind him as would be usual. The background cloth is crimson silk, and the decoration around the figures is an elegant tendril and leaf pattern, the tendrils emanating from two crosses, one above and one below the slab. The evangelists are represented in portrait busts, rather than with the evangelist symbols, each surrounded by an arc-shaped border filled with an acanthus leaf design. The slab itself is awkwardly rendered, so that it is difficult to tell whether the embroiderer intended it to be understood as the stone or as the shroud. The angels hold their rhipidia in one hand, the other hand being held to the face in a gesture of lamentation. These angels, therefore, are called upon to do double duty as

²⁰⁹ Granger-Taylor, "Epitaphios of Nicholas Eudaimonoionnes," 212, bibliography.

both deacons and mourners, roles usually taken by separate sets of angels as on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10).

Some of the differences between the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes and textiles that might have originated in Thessaloniki or Constantinople (such as catalogue numbers 1 and 4), lead to the conclusion that this textile was embroidered somewhere other than Thessaloniki or Constantinople. Warren Woodfin for example, has suggested that it represents a workshop of the Morea.²¹⁰ This is a logical conclusion, given that the patron was probably the same Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes who acted as ambassador to Venice for both Manuel II and the *despotes* of Morea Theodore II.²¹¹ While it is very likely the case that it was embroidered in the Morea, the only one other fifteenth century embroidery that has been suggested as being of Morean origin is the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44), and that example is very different from the Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes.²¹² We cannot discount the possibility that either or both might be of Morean origin. If they are, each might represent a unique extant example of its respective workshop. Because the family name of the patron is linked to the Morea, this aër-epitaphios might be Morean in origin, but there is no reason to disagree with Robin Cormack's suggestion that it could just as likely have been made in Constantinople or Thessaloniki even if it were intended as a gift to a church near Monemvasia.²¹³

²¹⁰ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 317.

²¹¹ Dionysios A. Zakythinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée* (London: Variorum, 1975), 88, 89, 169.

²¹² Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 10.

²¹³ Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki, eds. *Byzantium 330–1453*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2008, 433.

The inscriptions within the central panel are typical of this variant of the iconography, with the initials ΙΣ ΧΣ embroidered just above the head of Christ, and the words ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ are embroidered on the deacon-angels' oraria. Each evangelist is identified by name. Clockwise from the upper left they are Ο Α / ΙΩ / ΘΕΟ/ΛΟΓΟΣ (Saint John the Theologian), Ο Α/ΓΙ/ΟΣ ΜΑΤΘΕ/ΟΣ (Saint Matthew), Ο Α/ΓΙ/ΟΣ ΜΑΡ/ΚΟ (Saint Mark), and Ο Α/ΓΙ/ΟΣ / ΛΟΥ/ΚΑΣ (Saint Luke). The long inscription around the border has been damaged since the time of Capycius' *Diatriba*. Fortunately the engraving in that book records the full inscription as it appeared before the current damage had occurred (figure 42). The damaged parts of the border are near the lower left corner. This transcription presents the damaged parts within square brackets. Elided or omitted letters are presented within parentheses. Within the square brackets I have included the missing sections as Capece recorded them in 1756.

+Ο ΕΥΣΧΗΜΩΝ ΙΩΣΗΦ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΞΥΛΟΥ ΚΑΘΕΛΩΝ ΤΟ ΑΧΡΑΝΤΟ
 ΣΟΥ ΣΩΜΑ ΣΙΝΔΩΝΙ ΚΑΘΑΡΑ :· / (ε)ΙΛΗΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΩΝΑΣΙΝ : ΕΝ
 ΜΝΗΜΑΤΙ ΚΑΙΝΩ : ΚΗΔΕΥΣΑΣ ΑΠΕ[ΘΕ]ΤΟ :+· ΤΑΙΣ ΜΥΡΟΦΟΡΟΙΣ
 ΓΥΝΑΙΞΙ ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟ ΜΝΗΜΑ [ΕΠΙΣΤΑΣ :+· / Ο ΑΓΓΕ]ΛΟΣ [ΕΒΟ]ΛΑ ΤΑ
 ΜΥΡΑ ΤΟΙΣ ΘΝΗΤΟΙΣ ΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ ΑΡΜΟΔΙΑ ΧΣ ΔΕ ΔΙΑΦΘΟΡΑΣ
 ΕΔΕΙ/ΧΘΗ ΑΛΛΟΤΡΙΟΣ :+· ΔΕΗΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΘΟΥ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ
 ΤΟΥ ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΟΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΑΜΑ ΣΥΜΒΙΩ ΚΑ(ι) ΤΩΝ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ
 ΑΜΗΝ ΕΤΟΥΣ ,ϚϞIE IN IE.

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices and laid it in a new grave. Seeing at the grave the myrrh-bearing women, the angel cried out, "Here are the ointments fitting for mortal beings, but Christ, having died, has revealed himself in another form." Prayer of the servant of God Nikolas son of Eudaimonoioannes and his wife and children. Amen. In the year 6915 indiction 15.)

The year 6915 is 1406/7. Pauline Johnstone suggested that 1407 would have been an appropriate year for such a major gift as this embroidery since it was the year of

Theodore II's accession.²¹⁴

The inscription draws from two hymns that were originally part of the rituals associated with Good Friday and Holy Saturday. By the early fifteenth century, however, they had also become part of the Great Entrance rites, a result of what Robert Taft calls the “retro-influence of the Holy-Week ritual of the burial procession of Christ,” “Noble Joseph” being sung at the moment when the diskos is placed on the altar.²¹⁵ Pauline Johnstone noticed that the hymns in the inscription refer to aspects of the full Epitaphios Threnos iconography.²¹⁶ Absent from the embroidered image on this and other aër-epitaphioi up to this time, the myrrh-bearing women and Joseph of Arimathea become standard features, indispensable characters in the drama depicted on epitaphioi of the late fifteenth century and after. The reference to Good Friday and Holy Saturday in the embroidered inscription, then, might indicate that this textile was intended for use as an epitaphios rather than as an aër. The iconography and the hymn “Noble Joseph” are not inappropriate for an aër, however, so this textile is not sufficient evidence for a differentiation between aër and epitaphios by 1407.

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²¹⁴ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 121.

²¹⁵ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 246.

²¹⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 121.

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22. (Figure 43)

Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk.

183 x 136 cm.

First half of the 15th century.

Zagorsk State History and Art Museum Preserve (2437).

As an example of Rus' embroidery, the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk, clearly belongs to a group that we can associate with Moscow. Christ lies on a shroud across the middle of the central panel, the Virgin seated and embracing Christ's head, John the Theologian standing and holding Christ's feet. Two angels with rhipidia kneel in the zone below Christ. Four deacon-angels with rhipidia stand in the zone just above Christ. Each deacon-angel holds a rhipidion, but the two outer rhipidia are embroidered with the words ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ. The other four rhipidia are embroidered with six-winged seraphim. Above the chest of Christ is a ciborium with a lamp. At the top of the central panel, along the space below the top border are two mourning angels, the sun, and the moon. The space around the figures is filled with decorative motifs of dots, flower-like stars, and crosses in circles. An evangelist symbol fills each corner of the central panel, each extending outward from a small arc. Clockwise from the upper left they are John, Matthew, Luke, and Mark. Only Christ is identified with an inscription, the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ within the ciborium and on either side of the lamp. The palette is overwhelmingly of blue, gold, and silver, with touches of red to details such as shoes. The original blue silk background has worn away, leaving a blue canvas, but remnants of the original silk background show through the figures, especially in the body of Christ.

Whether we regard this textile as belonging to a group or as evidence of a workshop depends on the extent to which we can identify similarities between this textile

and others. The evidence is such that there does seem to be a tendency toward a particular iconographic type among these examples of Muscovite patronage, but the variations in style and technique suggest that this is a regional tendency rather than evidence of a single workshop, a notion discussed more fully in Part I, Chapter 3. The other examples that the Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios resembles are the aër-epitaphioi of Basil I (catalogue number 20, figure 39), the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44), the Novgorod Museum (catalogue number 24, figure 45), Basil II (catalogue number 34, figure 58), and the Stieglitz Museum (catalogue number 35, figure 59). The similarities in type, and often but not always, in style and technique, are compelling evidence for a regional species within the embroidery of fifteenth century Rus'. Each example is also a unique expression, a subspecies that exhibits traits of some of its relatives but not all. The Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios in its iconography is most like those of the early fifteenth century (Basil I and Photios).

The figural style of the Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios differs from those embroideries in the attenuation especially of Christ and John the Theologian. The proportions of the composition itself, the ratio of length to width, is also slightly different but within range of others of the Moscow group. The Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios has a length-to-width ratio of approximately 1.35:1, while the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II is 1.3:1. Each of the Moscow group is a short rectangle, but the Zagorsk embroidery is slightly longer than others of the Moscow group. For comparison, the Aër-Epitaphios of the Khutin Monastery, an example typical of Novgorod in the same period, is about 1.9:1, a much longer rectangle consistent with the Novgorod group and in which the figure of Christ is correspondingly attenuated, as though the whole composition had been stretched. The

Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30, figure 54) has a ratio of long side to short side of 1.5:1, not as oblong as the Khutin Aër-Epitaphios, but still considerably more oblong than the Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios. The Novgorod aër-epitaphioi have also been attributed to a workshop associated with the Archbishop Euphemios.²¹⁷ Some scholars have included examples such as the Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios with the Novgorod group, but N. A. Mayasova, who posited a “Moscow School,” correctly made a distinction between the two types.²¹⁸

The Zagorsk Aër-Epitaphios differs from others of the Moscow group most of all in the choice of inscriptions. One inscription, the Cherubic hymn, is in the border. In each corner of the border is a six-winged seraph. The border inscription runs clockwise beginning next to the seraph in the upper left corner.

ІЖЕ ХЕРՅВНМН ТАІНО ѿБРАЗУЮЩЕ І ЖНВОТВОРАЩЕІ ТРОИЦН
І / ТРНСВАТОЮ ПЪСНЬ ПРННОСАЩЕ ВСА/К ДГЫН ЖНТНІКՃЮ
ѿВЕРЗЪМЪ ПЕУАЛЪ ІАКО ЦРА ВСЪХ ПОДЪКМЛЮ/ЩЕ
АНГЛЪСАНМН НЕВДНМО ДАРЪ ВНОСНМЪ ЧННЪМН АЛЛУІА

(We who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of all invisibly escorted by the angelic choirs. Allelouia.)

This is the Cherubikon, the chant for the Great Entrance. The other inscription appears between John and the kneeling angel on the right at the bottom of the composition. The inscription here is the Slavonic version of “Τοῦ δείπνου σου τοῦ μυστικοῦ,” the chant

²¹⁷ E. V. Ignashina, *Old Russian Embroidery from the Collection of the Novgorod Museum* (Novgorod: Velikii Novgoroda, 2002), 5-6.

²¹⁸ Iu. A. Olushev, *Iskusstvo XIV–XV vv. Katalog naibolee viedaiushchikhcia proizvedenii etoi epokhi v muzee b. Troitse-Sergievoi Lavrie* (Sergiev, 1924), 11; Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 36; Nataliia Andreevna Mayasova, *La Broderie russe ancienne* (Moscow: Iskousstvo, 1971), 5–34.

substituted for the Cherubikon on Holy Thursday. It was also used as the Holy Thursday koinonikon.²¹⁹

БЕЧЕРН ТВОИ ТАННЪ ДНЕСЪ СЪИНЕ Б/ЖИ ПРИУДСТНИКА МА
ПРИМН НЕИ/МАМЪ БО ВАГОМЪ ТВОИМЪ ТА/НИЪИ ПОВѢДАТИ
НИ ЛОБЗАНИИ/ЖИВЪ АКО НЮДАНО ІАКО РАЗ/БОНИК
НСПОВѢДАСА ВОПИЮ ПОМА/НИ МА ГСН ЕГДА ПРИДЕШИ ВО
ЦРСТВИ

(At your mystical supper receive me today, O Son of God, as a communicant, for I will not speak of the mystery of your enemies. I will not kiss you as Judas did, but as the thief I will confess you, “Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom.”)

The version of the hymn embroidered here includes the phrase “when you come,” which was not originally included in the hymn.²²⁰ The placement of this inscription differs from the later examples, such the aër-epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34, figure 58) and the aër-epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum (catalogue number 35, figure 59), in that it is next to the legs of John the Theologian rather than between the rhipidia of the kneeling angels at the bottom of center panel.

It is, however, similar to the Stieglitz aër-epitaphios because of the sentiment expressed in the hymn. Both the hymn (“Τοῦ δείπνου σου τοῦ μυστικοῦ”) on the Zagorsk embroidery and the inscription on the embroidery from the Stieglitz Museum refer to the passage from Luke 23:42, a verse that provides the prototype for memorial dedication inscriptions, although there is no dedication on either of these embroideries. This sentiment is also repeated as part of the Great Entrance rite, as prescribed in manuscripts such as a fifteenth-century Euchologion from the Great Lavra now at Mount

²¹⁹ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 40; Dimitri E. Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 50.

²²⁰ Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 40.

Sinai.²²¹ If we judge by the choice of hymns embroidered on the border and within the central panel, the intended function of the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity may not have been intended only for use as an epitaphios for Holy Saturday Orthros. It features the Cherubikon and the Holy Thursday substitute for the Cherubikon. On the other hand this might indicate only that the local practice made use of both hymns on Holy Saturday, with the regular Cherubikon at the entrance, and with “Τοῦ δείπνου σου τοῦ μυστικοῦ” as the koinonikon.²²² This theory is plausible, and if it is true, judging by the evidence of extant embroideries, it would suggest that the aër for the Great Entrance was clearly distinguished from the epitaphios for Holy Saturday earlier in the Slavonic tradition than in the Greek. It is just as possible, however, that both hymns were considered appropriate for inscriptions on aëres. Once more, this textile is not sufficient evidence that there was distinction between the aër and the epitaphios by the middle of the fifteenth century.

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²²¹ Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie Liturgicheskikh Rukopisej*, volume 2, 609–11.

²²² Conomos, *Byzantine Trisagia and Cheroubika*, 40; Conomos, *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle*, 50; Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 69–70.

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23. (Figure 44)

Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios.

87.5 x 72 cm (center panel); 123 x 108 cm (with the border).

Early 15th century (center panel). The border was added later, possibly in the late 15th century or early 16th century.

State Historical Museum, Moscow (102608/11).

This Aër-Epitaphios associated with the Metropolitan Photios is now in the collection of the State Historical Museum in Moscow. It might once have been at the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow, but it was acquired from the Kolomenskoye Museum by the State Historical Museum in 1939. It had also been in the Ascension Church in Kolomenskoye.²²³ The condition in which we find this aër-epitaphios now makes it difficult to interpret. It has been heavily reworked. The original dark red silk background has been replaced with blue linen.²²⁴ The border is a later addition, according to N. A. Mayasova, belonging to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.²²⁵ The border has also been reworked, the figures removed from their old background and added to a blue linen of a darker value than the central panel. In its present state, this aër-epitaphios may be an assemblage combining elements from two or more textiles.

The iconography of the central pane is similar to examples associated with Muscovite patronage in the early to mid-fifteenth century, such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34, figure 58). The figure of Christ lies on a shroud with the seated Virgin embracing his head and the standing figure of John the Theologian holding his feet. An angel, shown in full figure, stands behind the Virgin and holds a rhipidion inscribed ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ (holy holy holy). Three more angels, shown from their knees up, stand behind the shroud, one near the Virgin, two near John. They all face the

²²³ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 34.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

center of the composition. Each of these three angels holds a rhipidion. On each rhipidion is the image of a six-winged seraphim. Above them are two mourning angels, the sun and the moon. Below the shroud are two kneeling angels facing each other and holding rhipidia. These rhipidia are also decorated with six-winged seraphim. Just above Christ's abdomen is a ciborium with a lamp. In each corner is an evangelist symbol, John in the upper left, Matthew in the upper right, Luke in the lower right, and Mark in the lower left.

A seraph fills each corner of the border. The two at the top face outward. The two at the bottom face the center of the lower border. In the center of the top is the transfiguration. In the center of the bottom is the Mandylion. The busts of eighteen saints make up the rest of the border. Along the top are four saints, two to the left of the transfiguration, two to the right, posed in three-quarter profile and facing the image of the transfiguration. At the bottom are six saints, also posed facing the center, in this case the Mandylion. These figures form an intercessory grouping with even the seraphim in the corners facing the center and participating. Eight more busts, four on each of the strips along the side, are posed frontally. P. Krotov identified the saints around the border in 1864.²²⁶ They include figures such as John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. The arrangement of the upper and lower borders is similar to zones representing concelebrating hierarchs in church sanctuary mosaics or frescos such as the wall painting in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now St. Kliment), Ohrid (figure 155).

Inscriptions include O ΩN (The One Who Exists) in the arms of the cross in

²²⁶ P. Krotkov, *Plashchanitsa vserossiiskogo mitropollita Photiia, khraniashchiasia v Bozhnesnskoj tserkvi sela Kolomenskogo* (Moscow, 1864), cited in Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 34.

Christ's halo. Two monograms appear between the rhipidia of the kneeling angels. Below the monograms is a brief inscription. Mayasova interpreted the two monograms (ΦΩΤ ΜΤΠ) as the monograms of the Metropolitan Photios: ΦΩΤ(ΙΟς) Μ(Η)Τ(ΡΟ)Π(ΟΛΙΤΗΣ).²²⁷ The inscription between the angels and below the monograms is a standard type of inscription for aër-epitaphioi including other examples of the Moscow type: +ΜΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΜΟΥ / ΚΕ ΟΤΑΝ ΕΛΘΗΣ ΕΝ / ΤΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ (Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom.) This phrase (adapted from Luke 23:42) is often used on aër-epitaphioi and serves as a template for the memorial dedicatory inscriptions such as those on the Studenica Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 18). It also appears on the Stieglitz Museum Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 35) where it is also in Greek.

The monogram seems conclusively to associate this textile with the Metropolitan Photios (1408–1431). This is the same Photios with whom several Byzantine embroideries are associated including the so-called “Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios,” probably the most famous of all embroidered Byzantine textiles (figure 88–89).²²⁸ The Major Sakkos or “Large Sakkos” is usually dated 1416–1418.²²⁹ In a panel near the bottom of the sakkos, near the portrait of John Palaiologos (i.e. John VIII), is a portrait of Photios (figure 90) with the inscription Ο ΠΑΝΙΕΡΩΤΑΤΟΣ Μ(ΗΤΡ)Ρ(Ο)ΠΟΛΗΤΗΣ ΚΙΕΦ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣΙΣ ΡΩΣΙΑΣ Ο ΦΩΤΙΟΣ (The All-Holy

²²⁷ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 34.

²²⁸ Much has been written about this sakkos, but see especially E. Piltz and W. Woodfin. Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins*; Woodfin, “Late Byzantine Liturgical Vestments”.

²²⁹ Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins*, 31; Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 337.

Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, Photios).²³⁰ The figural style of the images embroidered on the sakkos is quite different from the style of the aër-epitaphios, and there is no reason to suppose the two were embroidered either at the same time or in the same place. Photios was appointed in September 1408, but he remained in Constantinople for some months after that. N. A. Mayasova suggests that the aër-epitaphios was one of a number of objects that Photios commissioned before he left for his new assignment.²³¹ This seems unlikely to me because of the similarity of this aër-epitaphios to the Moscow type. It seems more likely that this was an object commissioned after the arrival of Photios in Rus'. Mayasova, however, believed that, while the iconography is similar to examples such as the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity (catalogue number 22), the style of this embroidery is very different, even "provincial," and that perhaps this embroidery was made in Photios' hometown of Monemvasia in the Morea.²³²

I disagree with this characterization. Although the style is different in some ways, especially the use of vibrant color in the silk thread, overall the figures look very much as they do in other examples of the Moscow type. The figures are attenuated, if a bit stiff. Their proportions and poses are consistent with the Moscow type. The hair of John is rendered as bushy and curly in much the same way as it is for the same figure in the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I (catalogue number 20, figure 39), only with a longer tress extending down the figure's neck. In fact, the hair of John in the Aër-Epitaphios of Photios is much like that of the deacon-angels in the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I. One could also argue,

²³⁰ Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins*, 36.

²³¹ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 10.

²³² Ibid.

however, that the hair of these figures also resembles the hair of the deacon-angels and mourning angels on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10). Such comparisons of style are necessarily subjective. We must also bear in mind that the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios has been reworked. Not only have the figures been mounted on a new background, but they have also been retouched with later silk embroidery. To cite the figural style is not enough to make a convincing attribution of the Aër-Epitaphios of Photios to a provincial, Morean workshop rather than to a Constantinopolitan workshop. The argument also rests on the assumption that this embroidery was made before Photios left for his new post.

If we speculate about the possibilities, it is easy to imagine that the patron for this object might have deliberately commissioned an aër-epitaphios of the local type. On the other hand, a date within the first decade or so of Photios' tenure as metropolitan could also mean that this aër-epitaphios was in fact the prototype for the Moscow group of aër-epitaphioi, that this embroidery was taken from Greece or even Constantinople to Russia where it transplanted this iconographic type. The Greek inscription would seem to support this interpretation. Such speculation, however intriguing, cannot be confirmed using only the evidence of the extant embroideries.

References:

- Krotkov, P. *Plashchanitsa vserossiiskogo mitropollita Fotiia, khraniashchiasia v Boznesnskoj tserkvi sela Kolomenskogo*. Moscow, 1864.
- Mayasova, Natalija Andreevna. *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery, Byzantium, Balkans, Russia: Catalogue of the exhibition, XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantinists, Moscow, August 8-15, 1991*. Moscow: Kremlin State Museum Publishers, 1991, number 7, page 34, photograph on p. 35.
- . "Pamiatniki srednevekovogo litsevoogo shit'ia iz sobraniia Uspenskogo sobora." In *Uspenskii sobor Moskovskogo Kremliia: materialy i issledovaniia*, edited by Engelina Sergeevna Smirnova. Moscow: Nauka, 1985.

Ostashenko, Elena. *Andrei Rublev: Palaeologue Traditions in Moscow Painting of the late 14th to first third of the 15th centuries*. Moscow: Nidrik, 2005, photograph among the plates between pages 64 and 65.

24. (Figure 45)
Aër-Epitaphios from Novgorod (Novgorod 12).²³³
Size unknown.
Early 15th century.
Novgorod History and Art Museum-Reservation.

Demetrios Pallas listed this embroidery among the epitaphioi that exhibit a developed Epitaphios Threnos iconography.²³⁴ A. N. Svirin listed it among examples of the art of embroidery from Novgorod.²³⁵ Only one photograph has been published, with the 1932 essay by A. N. Svirin, which clearly reveals that this aër-epitaphios may be grouped with the Moscow type. The Moscow type also includes the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44) and the Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I (catalogue number 20, figure 39) among others.²³⁶ Svirin referred to this embroidery as Novgorod 12, a title I repeat only for convenience.

Color and the quality of the embroidery are all but impossible to evaluate from the published photograph and Svirin's description, and I have not seen this example in person. A. N. Svirin described one of the costumes of the angels on the left as "dark green, green and white."²³⁷ The iconography, as in other examples of the Moscow group of aër-epitaphioi, shows the body of Christ on a shroud, with the seated Virgin holding Christ's head. A standing figure of John the Theologian holds Christ's feet. Four deacon-angels stand behind the central group, and two kneeling angels are arranged symmetrically below the shroud. Each angel holds a rhipidion. In the case of Novgorod

²³³ Aleksei Nikolaevich Svirin, "Une broderie du XVe siècle, de style pittoresque, représentant le 'Čin,' au musée de Sergiev (ancienne laure de la Trinité) " in *L'Art byzantin chez les Slaves: L'ancienne Russie, les Slaves Catholiques* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1932), 290.

²³⁴ Pallas, "Der Epitaphios," 795.

²³⁵ Svirin, "Une broderie du XVe siècle," 290.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid., 291.

12 all six rhipidia are decorated with six-winged seraphim. In the zone above the central group are two mourning angels between the sun and the moon. A ciborium with a lamp is embroidered above Christ. The evangelist symbols are arranged in the corners where they project from concentric arcs. John is in the upper left, Matthew in the upper right, Luke in the lower right, and Mark in the lower left. Like the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I, Novgorod 12 has been reworked. The figures have been removed from their original backing and remounted. No decorative motifs or inscriptions have survived.

The figural style is somewhat different from the other examples of the Moscow type. Svirin referred to the style as “*un peu provincial*.”²³⁸ This quality actually makes it seem more like the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue number 23, figure 44) than any other example of Rus’ embroidery of the fifteenth century. Compare, for example the poses of the kneeling angels in these two aër-epitaphioi. The figures of Christ are noticeably less attenuated in these two embroideries than in other embroideries from Moscow and especially from Novgorod. The ciborium represented in Novgorod 12 is actually more interesting than the ciborium in the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios. Concentric arcs of different colors (or values, since a black and white photograph is all that I have seen) form the top of the ciborium. This kind of detail is difficult to evaluate in photographs of heavily reworked textiles. While a conclusive attribution is impossible, this embroidery is like the Moscow type and most like the Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Photios. For that reason we might reasonably, if tentatively, conclude that Novgorod 12 is a product of the first half of the fifteenth century.

²³⁸ Ibid.

References:

- Pallas, Demetrios I. "Der Epitaphios." In *RBK*, Volume 5, 789–806. Stuttgart: Anton Hierseemann, 1995, 795.
- Svirin, Aleksei Nikolaevich. "Une broderie du XVe siècle, de style pittoresque, représentant le 'Čin,' au musée de Sergiev (ancienne laure de la Trinité)" In *L'art Byzantin Chez Les Slaves: L'ancienne Russie, Les Slaves Catholiques*, Part 2, 282–91. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1932, pp. 290–1, figure 95.

25. (Figure 46)
Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal.
210 x 114 cm.
1410–1416.
State Historical Museum, Moscow (19724 III rb-2).

The Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal is one of two extant embroideries that were almost certainly intended for use as aëres and are decorated with the Communion of the Apostles in the central panel, rather than the Epitaphios Threnos or the figure of Christ as Amnos. The other example is the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan (catalogue number 43, figure 67). Both are very large, although the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal is slightly larger. The image in the central panel follows the typical iconography for the Communion of the Apostles, which was a standard feature in the decorative programs of church sanctuaries, whether in fresco or in mosaic. The eleventh-century mosaic program at Saint Sophia in Kiev includes a well-known example (figure 169). The so-called “Riha Paten” of the sixth century famously includes an early example of this iconography in gilded silver repousée (figure 95).²³⁹ The iconography was also standard for kalymmata by the time this large embroidery was made, but it is rare on textiles as large as the Suzdal Aër. There is one example of an aër-epitaphios that includes both the Communion of the Apostles and Christ Amnos, the much older Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10). The size of both textiles suggests that they were intended for use as aëres rather than as kalymmata. The Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal and the Aër of the Church of the Dormition at

²³⁹ Marvin C. Ross, *Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Painting*, vol. 1, Catalog of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1962), 12–15.

Pereiaslavl-Riazan both omit the figure of Christ as Amnos but they do both include hagiographic scenes of Joachim, Anne, and Mary around the border.

In the central panel of the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal, Christ is shown twice, once distributing the bread of the Eucharist and once distributing the wine. He stands, in both halves of the iconography, behind an altar under a baldachin. The altars are shown in isometric perspective and the diagonal lines of both altars are parallel. In other words, the diagonal lines of the altar tops all point in the same direction. A group of six apostles is shown on either side, queued up to receive either the bread or the wine. Framing the entire scene are buildings, also shown in isometric perspective but pointing in opposite directions from each other. The architectural setting was also a standard feature of this iconography as in the example at the late thirteenth-century Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now St. Kliment) at Ohrid (figure 155). Above the groups of apostles two angels hover symmetrically. The ground in the lower quarter of the central panel is embroidered in a different color from the rest of the background, buff with patches of green that suggest a leaf-covered landscape rather than the floor of an architectural space.

The colors are generally naturalistic but decidedly vibrant. The whole background is stitched in red thread, which might be the result of a subsequent restoration that replaced the damaged or worn original background cloth, but the original cloth over which the background was embroidered was also red.²⁴⁰ The backgrounds for the borders are also embroidered, and it is difficult to discern from photographs whether the embroidered backgrounds are original. Nevertheless, red was the intended color of the

²⁴⁰ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

background for the central panel. The buildings in green contribute to the vibrancy with the simultaneous contrast that results from such close placement of complementary colors. There is little gold embroidery in the central scene or in the hagiographic scenes of the border, which is clearly in the same figural style and of the same period.

Gold is reserved mostly for halos, contour lines in drapery, and for the inscriptions. Each angel is identified with an inscription: O APX MHX (The Archangel Michael) on the left, O APX ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (The Archangel Gabriel) on the right. K. G. Serebryakova transcribed these as OAG MHX and OAG ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ.²⁴¹ They are both clearly identified as O APX (archangel), however, rather than O AG (saint). The abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ is embroidered twice, once each over the two figures of Christ. Between the angels and the apostles are the usual phrases appropriate for the Communion of the Apostles found on many embroidered kalymmata as well as on the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios where it appears in Greek rather than Slavonic. Over the group of apostles on the left side of the central panel of the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal is inscribed “ΠΙΝΗΜΕΤΕ ΙΔΗΤΕ СЕН ЕС / ТѢЛО МОЕ ΛΟΜΗΜΟΕ ΖΑ ВЪΙ” (Take, eat. This is my body). On the right is “ΠΙΝΗΤΕ ΕΥΤ ΝΕΙΔ ΒСН СЕН ЕС КРОВЬ / ΜΟΙΑ ΝΟΒΑΓΩ ΖΑΒΕΤΑ ΠΡΟΛΗΒΑΝΕ (Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant). “

Around the central panel is a narrow band of a light, neutral color embroidered with the gold dedicatory inscription.

В ЛТѢ 2А[...] ПРИ КНИАЖЕНЬИ ВЕЛИКОГО КНИАЗЯ ВАСИЛѢА
ДМИТРИЄВНУА ВСИЯ РУС ПРИ АРХИЕПІѢ ПРИ ФОТІ
МІТРОПОЛІТ / ВСІА РУСІ ПРИ ПСМІ МІТРОФАНѢ СОЗДАНЪ
БЪСТЬ ВЪЗДУХЪ СНН / КОСТІАНТИНОВОЮ ЄГРОФЪНОЮ АЖЕ

²⁴¹ Ibid.

ПРЕУНСТѢН МТРН БОЖТН Н ЧЕСТНАГО ІУІА РОЖДЕСТВА ДА
БОУДЕТЬ / НА НЕН А КОНУАНЪ БЫІСТЬ МЦА ІОУНА ВЪ В НА
ПАМТЬ СО ѠЦА ННKHΘOPА

(In the year 6900 in the time of the Grand Prince Vasilii Dmitrievich, prince of all Rus', and in the time of Archbishop Foti Metropolitan of all Rus', and in the time of Bishop Mitrofanie of Suzdal, this aër was made by Ogrophiena Ko(n)stantinova as her prayer to the Holy Mother of God, the Virgin, that our child-bearing may be not unfulfilled. It was made in the month of June on the second in commemoration of Saint Nikephoros.)

The inscription begins “В ЛТѢ ҃2А” (in the year 6900), but there is a gap after the date.

The date as it stands would give the year 1391/2, which is within the period of Grand Prince Vasilii Dmitrievich (1389–1431), but not within the periods of the other persons mentioned in the inscription, Metropolitan Photios (1410–1431) and Mitrophanes the bishop of Suzdal (1406–1416). The date might have been damaged and is missing some figures, or perhaps the date was for some reason never fully embroidered. As K. G. Serebryakova points out, however, we can narrow down the date at least to the period 1410 to 1416 when Photios was Metropolitan and Mitrophanes was bishop of Suzdal.²⁴² June second is the feast day of Nikephoros, an iconodule who wrote in defense of icons in the eighth to ninth centuries and who served as patriarch of Constantinople, as Nikephoros I, from 806 to 815.²⁴³

Around the inscription is a border of figural scenes including evangelist portraits in the corners. Around that border is another narrow border embroidered with a buff silk thread in the background, as in the border with the inscription. The outermost narrow border is decorated with a vine-and-leaf design. The vine in metallic thread, the leaves in red, brown, and white silk. The figural scenes in the border between the dedicatory

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Alexander P. Kazhdan, “Nikephoros I,” in *ODB*, vol., 1477.

inscription and the vine-and-leaf design are embroidered against a background of white silk thread. In the upper left is (OA IQ O ΘEO/ΛΟΓΙ) Saint John the Theologian, and (O AΓΙΟΣ ΜΑΤΘΕΗ) Saint Matthew is in the upper right. In the lower right is (OAI MAPKO) Saint Mark, and (OA ΛΥΚΟ) Saint Luke is in the lower left.

The rest of the outer border is a series of scenes concerning Joachim, Anne, and Mary, a cycle derived from the apocryphal Protevangelium of James.²⁴⁴ There are eighteen scenes labeled with inscriptions. The following transcriptions follow those of N. A. Mayasova and K. G. Serebryakova.²⁴⁵ From left to right across the top: 1. ВЪВРОЩЕНІЄ ДАРОВЪ (The rejection of gifts); 2. ТОГДА ПРИИДЕ В ВЕСЬ ДЩЕ ДЪЗЪ БЕЗЪУДООВА (Blaming Anne for giving no child); 3. ΔΚΗΜΤ ΓΡΑΔΕΤЪ / В ПУСТЫНІЮ (Joachim goes into the wilderness); 4. ΔΝΝΑ ΠΛΑΨΕΤCΑ (Anne Weeps); 5. ΔΝΓΛЪ БΛΓОВЪСТΗΤЪ / ΔΝΝЪ (An angel brings good tidings to Anne); 6. ВЪВЪЩІАЮΤЪ ΔΝΝЪ ΔΚΗ/ΜΟΒЪ ΠΡΗΧΟΔ (Anne hears of Joachim's homecoming). From top to bottom on the right: 7. ΔΝΓΛЪ ΓΝЪ БΛΓВЪ/СТΗΤЪ ΔΚΗΜΥ (An angel brings good tidings to Joachim); 8. ΔΚΗΜΤ ΓΡΑΔΕΤЪ / C CΤΑΔΤΙ (Joachim goes with the herds); 9. БΛΓВЩІЕННЕ (The Annunciation). From top to bottom on the left: 10. ΖΔΨΑΤЪЕ (Conception); 11. ΠΡΗΙΑΤЪ ΔΑΡΥΙ ΔΚΗΜΔ Η Δ/ΝΝΥΙ (The gifts of Joachim and Anne are accepted); 12. БΛΓВН ЕРЪН ΔΚΗΜΔ Η Δ/ΝΝΥ (The priests bless Joachim and Anne). From left to right across the bottom: 13. ΡЖТВО CΤΥІА БЦА (The Nativity of the Virgin); 14. ΔΡΟΥΕΝНЕ CΤΥІА БЦА (Caressing the Virgin); 15. ΠΟCΤΥΠΛΕΝНЕ CΤΥІА БЦА (The first steps of the Virgin); 16. ВВЕΔЪНЪЕ (Presentation); 17. ΜΟΛΕΝЪЕ ΟЖΕΖΛЪХЪ (Prayer); 18.

²⁴⁴ Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 48–67.

²⁴⁵ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

ΠΡΗΕΜΛΕΤΉ ΗΟΗΘΉ ΔΒΙΨΙΟ (Joseph accepts the Virgin).

The figural style for these scenes is very much the same as the style of the central panel. Similar restoration, such as the embroidered background, also affected the border cycle. The subject of the cycle of scenes in the border seems to have been a very deliberate choice. Although it is not a standard theme for aëres, it is appropriate in this case because the main theme of the cycle is related to the sentiment expressed in the dedicatory inscription—a prayer to the Virgin not to go childless. The scenes depict Joachim and Anne who, in the apocryphal gospel story, were also afflicted with childlessness. Anne even sings a lament (the subject of the fourth scene from the left in the upper border) in the same vein as the part of the border inscription that mentions child bearing.²⁴⁶ The outcome of the story for Anne is, of course, that she conceives and gives birth to Mary. An interesting further detail of the story as related in the Protevangelium of James is that Mary is called upon to weave the purple and scarlet thread for the katapetasma, presumably meant to be understood as the same veil of the temple that is torn at the moment of Christ's death.²⁴⁷ This scene is not among those illustrated, but the choice of scenes for the border is relevant to the aër for at least two reasons. The theme of childlessness is appropriate to the patron, as we know from the dedication. The church for which the embroidery was made was the Suzdal Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, and the “Nativity of Our Lady” is among the scenes embroidered in the border.

The identity of the Ogrophiena mentioned in the dedication is unknown, but some

²⁴⁶ Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 55.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 61.

scholars have suggested that the designation “Konstantinova” could be a clue.²⁴⁸

Ogrophiena might have been the wife or the daughter of Dmitrii Donskoi’s son Konstantine who died childless in 1433.²⁴⁹ The preoccupation with childlessness in the inscription and in the nature of the hagiographic scenes around the border make Konstantine’s wife Anastasia, who died in 1419, a likely candidate.²⁵⁰ The language of the dedication indicates that “this aër was made by Ogrophiena Konstantinova,” but the phrase “was made” probably refers only to patronage as in other such dedications.²⁵¹ The Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II, from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34) is another example. Whoever Ogrophiena was, she was the patron, but she did not necessarily have a hand in the needlework.

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²⁴⁸ Tikhonravov, “Shitaia pelesna XV veka a Suzdal’skom Rozhkestvenskom sobore.”; Shchepkin, “Pamiatnik zolotnogo shitia nachala XV v.”; Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

²⁴⁹ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 254; Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

²⁵⁰ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 54.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

pp. 13–14, number 10.

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26. (Figure 47)

Aër-Epitaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios, from the Žółkiew Monastery.

172 x 128 cm.

1427/8.

Present whereabouts unknown.

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Žółkiew Monastery has been missing since World War II, but it was photographed and it has also been the subject of an unusual amount of scholarly attention. The monastery at Žółkiew was simply its last location before it was moved to a museum in Lwów. The museum was its last known location. The Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is certainly of Moldavian origin, as the dedicatory inscription reveals, and it was in the Moldavian Metropolitan Church in Suceava until it and other treasures were taken from Suceava to Poland by John III Sobieski in 1686.²⁵²

The Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is notable as the first aër-epitaphios known to have included the words “ᾄδοντα, βοῶντα, κεκραγόντα, και λέγοντα” (“Singing, crying, shouting, and saying”) inscribed in the arcs around the evangelist symbols. These words are spoken during the Anaphora as the introduction to the Epinikion Hymn, the Hymn of Victory (Ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἄγιος Κύριος Σαβαώθ—Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth), which derives in part from Revelations 4:8.²⁵³ The presence of these words on aër-epitaphioi such as the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios therefore reinforces the eschatological theme of this iconography. It may be, as Pauline Johnstone noted, that the words in this context were meant to be understood as onomatopoeic utterances of the beasts representing the

²⁵² Musicescu, *La Broderie Médiévale Roumaine*, 35, number 8; Maryan Sokołowski, “Spadek po metropolie suczawskim Doziteuszu i jego losy,” *Sprawozdania komisji do badania historii sztuki w Polsce*. 4 (1891): 87–105; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 173, note 2.

²⁵³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 83.

evangelists.²⁵⁴ Johnstone also cited this embroidery as the last epitaphios “in the purely liturgical style,” meaning that the image includes only the figures of Christ as Amnos and deacon-angels or mourning angels, without any of the figures from the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography.²⁵⁵ This is an error, however, since later examples do exist. They include the 1638 Aër-Epitaphios of Vasile Lupu (figure 168), which was clearly executed in imitation of the Žólkiew Aër-Epitaphios.

The Žólkiew embroidery, because of its resemblance in turn to the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17), seems to demonstrate that the older embroidery was already in Moldavia or Wallachia by 1427. It might also be the case that both embroideries emulated other models or a common source, but the resemblance is striking enough that it seems plausible that the embroiderers of the Žólkiew Aër-Epitaphios were familiar with the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia. The iconography includes the figure of Christ as Amnos. Above Christ are five angels. From left to right they are a deacon-angel with a rhipidion, an angel with hands held out in a gesture of lamentation, an angel with its head pointing down as though flying in from above, another angel holding its hands in a gesture of lamentation, and another deacon-angel holding a rhipidion. The rhipidia are decorated with images of six-winged seraphim. Below the figure of Christ are four more angels, much like the group of five above Christ but without the central angel flying in from above. The space around Christ and the angels is filled with flower-like stars. In each corner is one of the evangelist symbols.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 37, note 38.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

This iconography is essentially the same as that on the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios.²⁵⁶ Differences include the number of angels (there are twelve on the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios and only nine on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios), the number of flower-like stars (the background of the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is only sparsely decorated compared to the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios), the evangelist symbols (which the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios lacks), the pose of Christ (with his hands resting on his waist rather than crossed over the torso), and the border inscription. The Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is the earliest known Moldavian aër-epitaphios to use the border for the dedicatory inscription as part of the decorative program.²⁵⁷ The Wallachian Cozia Aër-Epitaphios of 1396 (catalogue number 15) also includes an inscription around the border, but that inscription does not include a dedication. There are earlier examples than the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios with dedicatory inscriptions about the border, but they were made in places other than Moldavia or Wallachia.

The inscriptions on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios are in Greek, but they are written in Cyrillic characters. Alexandru cel Bun and his fourth wife Marina are named in the dedicatory inscription, but the patron is identified as the Metropolitan Makarios of Moldavia and Wallachia.

(Across the top) ΟΥΤΟC ΟΘΕΙΟC ΚΑΙ ΙΕΡΟC ΑΜΝΟC ΓΕΓΟΝΕΝ ΕΠΙ ΤΗC ΔΥΘΕΝΤΕΙΑC ΚΥΡΩ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΔΔΕΞΑΝΔΡΩ ΒΟΕΒΟΔΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΙΝΗC ΤΩΝ / (Across the bottom) ΕΥΕΒΕCΤΑΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΕΡΑCΜΙΩΤΑΤΩΝ ΥΙΩΝ ΔΥΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΩ ΗΛΙΑ ΒΟΕΒΟΔΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΙΝΗC ΤΩΝ ΕΥΕΒΕCΤΑΤΩΝ / (Up the right side) ΔΙΑ CΥΝΔΡΟΜΗC ΚΑΙ ΕΞΟΔΩ ΤΩ

²⁵⁶ Several scholars have pointed this out including Maria Ana Musicescu and Émile Turdeanu. Maria Ana Musicescu, “La Broderie roumaine au moyen-âge,” *RRHA* 1, no. 1 (1964): 64; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 174.

²⁵⁷ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 83.

ΠΑΝΙΕΡΟΤΑΤΗ Μ(ΗΤ)ΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗ ΜΟΛΔΟΒΛΔ/(Up the left side)ΧΙΔC ΚΑΙ
ΠΑΡΑΘΑΛΑC CΙΑC ΚΥΡΗ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΗ ΕΝ ΕΤΕΙ ϞϞΛϞ²⁵⁸

(This divine and holy Amnos was made during the reign of Lord John Alexander Voivode, and the most pious Marina and their beloved and most pious children Elia Voivode and Marina, through the patronage and at the expense of the all-holy Metropolitan of Moldovlachia and the land by the sea, Lord Makarios, in the year 6936 [1427/8]).

The arrangement of the text is unusual, continuing from the top border to the bottom border to the right border and to the left border. This might be insignificant, only a choice of the patron or the embroiderer. On the other hand, since this is the earliest example of a dedicatory inscription around the border, perhaps we can attribute the unusual arrangement to the experimental nature of the decorative border inscription at this period in Moldavia. Later examples tend to proceed in one direction around the border, clockwise (as on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery—catalogue number 44, figure 69) or counterclockwise (as on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery—catalogue number 45, figure 71).

The rest of the inscriptions were embroidered within the central panel. The abbreviation IC XC (Jesus Christ) was embroidered just above the halo around Christ's head. The title Ο ΕΝΤΑΦΙΑC ΜΟC (The Entombment) was embroidered across the space just above the figure of Christ. In the corners were abbreviations for the names of the evangelists and the words that introduce the Epinikion Hymn: ΙϞ (John) in the upper left, with the word ΔΑΟΝΤΑ (Singing) filling the arc around the eagle representing John; ΛϞΚΔC (Luke) in the upper right, with the word ΒΟϞΝΤΑ (crying) filling the arc around the ox representing Luke; ΜΑΡΚΟC (Mark) in the lower left, with the word

²⁵⁸ There are two more letters, but I have been unable to decipher them. Turdeanu faced the same difficulty remarking, “Nous ne pouvons pas résoudre la signification de deux lettres qui suivent: P. Ϟ.” Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 203, note 1.

ΚΕΚΡΑΓΟΤΑ (shouting) filling the arc around the lion representing Mark; and ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥΣ (Matthew) in the lower right, with the words ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΟΝΤΑ (and saying) filling the arc around the winged man representing Matthew.

The Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia seems to have served as a model, directly or indirectly, for the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios. This is probably a case of synthesis, however, combining more than one set of influences (a decorative border inscription and evangelist symbols in the corners) and possibly an innovation (the words in the arcs around the evangelist symbols).²⁵⁹ Émile Turdeanu described this embroidery as a combination of the Serbian type (represented by the Ephemelia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios) and the type represented by the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3).²⁶⁰ The Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios would have to have influenced the embroiderers working for the Metropolitan Makarios indirectly through an unknown intermediary. The story may be even more complex than that. The Cozia Aër-Epitaphios, as already mentioned, also seems to have had some influence, directly or indirectly, on Makarios' embroiderers. Perhaps both the Cozia embroiderers and Makarios' embroiderers emulated a common source for the decorative border inscription.

Regardless of what the sources might have been that Makarios' embroiderers emulated, in its iconography and decoration the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios represents a transitional type of aër-epitaphios. It is a synthesis of certain elements that would

²⁵⁹ Interestingly the decorative border inscription and the evangelist symbols in the corners are features that Émile Turdeanu described as not appearing in Serbian embroideries, an observation that Pauline Johnstone repeated, but the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (number 6) has a border inscription and evangelist symbols in the corners of the central panel. Ibid.: 201; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 83, note 86.

²⁶⁰ Turdeanu, "Les Épitaphes moldaves," 176.

continue in the Moldavian tradition (flower-like stars, evangelist symbols in the corner) with elements that were already archaic by 1428 (the figure of Christ without any shroud or slab). Later Moldavian embroideries gradually introduced elements of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography, as we see on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery of 1436/7 (catalogue number 28) and the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare of 1490/1 (catalogue number 44). These two later examples, among others, were probably influenced, at least indirectly, by either the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios or the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios or both.

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27. (Figures 48 and 49)
The Aër of Princess Malina.
79 x 70 cm.²⁶¹
Ca. 1427–1500.
Monastery of Bistrița, Neamț County, Romania.

The subject of relatively little scholarly attention, the Aër of Princess Malina was probably intended for use as an aër during the Great Entrance.²⁶² Its size is comparable to two of the textiles in the treasury of the Putna monastery (Putna 65 and 85—catalogue numbers 40 and 41) at least one of which was meant to be an aër. Small size, however, would not necessarily disqualify the Aër of Princess Malina for use as an epitaphios during Holy Week. Neither would the iconography necessarily disqualify it from use as an aër. The iconography is fairly typical of the later fifteenth century in its content, although it is somewhat unusual in its details. The figure of Christ lies on a striped shroud. The Virgin, seated on a stool, holds Christ by the shoulders with Christ's halo below the Virgin's chin. The Virgin is identified with the abbreviations MP ΘV on either side of her halo, Christ with the abbreviations IC XC above his body. A bearded figure holds Christ's feet. This figure is probably meant to be Joseph of Arimathea rather than John the Theologian. Another figure, beardless but with short hair and apparently male, bends over Christ's legs from behind the bearded figure. The beardless figure is almost certainly meant to be John the Theologian. A third figure, presumably one of the

²⁶¹ These are the dimensions given by Ana Dobjanschi in 1985. I. D. Ștefănescu gave 60.5 x 58.5 in 1947. The discrepancy may be due to whether or not a subsidiary backing cloth has been included in the dimensions. I have not seen this example in person. I. D. Ștefănescu, "L' Aër de la Princesse Malina," *Revistă istorică română* 15, no. 2 (1945): 130; Musicescu and Draguț, *Broderia veche Românească*, 34–35, catalog number 10.

²⁶² I. D. Ștefănescu's work is the most important. Ștefănescu, "L' Aër de la Princesse Malina," 129–32; Mihai Berza, ed. *Cultura Moldovenească în Timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Bucharest: Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1964), 491.

myrrophoroi, sticks out from behind Joseph of Arimathea at the right edge of the composition (see figure 49). She is posed with her hands to her face, a gesture of lamentation that has the unfortunate effect, for someone living in the twenty-first century, of calling to mind a certain famous painting by Edvard Munch. Two angels are shown above the central grouping, two more below. None of the angels holds a rhipidion. The evangelist symbols are represented in the corners: Matthew in the upper left, John in the upper right, Mark in the lower right, and Luke in the lower left. A decorative motif of flower-like stars fills the space around the figures above Christ. The three sides of the border to the left, above, and to the right of the central panel include a pattern of flower-like stars and four-lobed designs alternating with six-winged seraphim.

The lower border contains the dedicatory inscription. +ЃБНОВН СІН АЕРЪ КНѢГІНѢ МЛАХНА (This aēr was restored by the Princess Malina). “ЃБНОВН” could also be translated “was renewed” or “was consecrated.” The “Malina” mentioned in the inscription is thought by some scholars to have been Princess Marina, taking the “А” as either a possible error on the part of the embroiderer or a possible alternative pronunciation.²⁶³ Neither hypothesis is unreasonable, but neither can be proved. Princess Marina was the fourth wife of Alexandru cel Bun (Alexander the Kind). Marina and Alexandru cel Bun are known to have been patrons of other embroideries. Their portraits appear on the Epitrachelion of Staraya-Lagoda, for example (figure 170).²⁶⁴ In 1945 I. D. Ștefănescu thought that the style of the two embroideries indicated that both were the

²⁶³ I. D. Ștefănescu speculated about this possibility in 1945. Ștefănescu, “L’Aēr de la Princesse Malina,” 132; Ana Dobjanschi has also mentioned this possibility. Musicescu and Draguț, *Broderia veche Românească*, 34–35, catalog number 10.

²⁶⁴ Ștefănescu, “L’Aēr de la Princesse Malina,” 131–32; Berza, ed. *Cultura Moldovenească în Timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 303, figures 17 and 18; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 9–13, 21–23, plates 5, 9, and 12.

work of the same hand, possibly even Alexandru cel Bun's Marina herself.²⁶⁵ Alexandru cel Bun was the founder, in 1402, of the monastery where the Aër of Princess Malina is preserved.²⁶⁶ If we assume that "Malina" was in fact Alexandru cel Bun's wife Marina then the year 1427/8 would be the earliest possible date for this aër. This is the period during which we have the earliest references to Marina as the mother of Alexandru cel Bun's children.²⁶⁷ The dedicatory inscription on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios of 1427/8 (catalogue number 26) mentions Alexandru cel Bun, Marina and their children. The inscription on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is, however, written in Greek, albeit in Cyrillic characters, while the inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina is written in Church Slavonic. There are, on the other hand, certain similarities between the actual letters of the two inscriptions. The form of the omega on the Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina is similar to some of the omegas on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios (figures 171 and 172). This is insufficient evidence to claim that the two objects were products of the same embroiderer, workshop, or even of the same period.

By 1964 I. D. Ștefănescu had apparently changed his mind about identifying Malina with Marina, and he stated simply that "Malina" was an unknown historical figure.²⁶⁸ Reasoning from the iconography, Ștefănescu proposed that the theme of the iconography (the Epitaphios Threnos rather than the figure of Christ as Amnos) on the Aër of Princess Malina suggested a later date, perhaps during the reign of Ștefan cel

²⁶⁵ Ștefănescu, "L' Aër de la Princesse Malina," 132.

²⁶⁶ Vasile Draguț and Corina Nicolescu, *Monumente istorice bisericești din Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* (Iași: Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Sucevei, 1974).

²⁶⁷ Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, volume 4, 52.

²⁶⁸ Berza, ed. *Cultura Moldovenească în Timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 491.

Mare.²⁶⁹ Specifically, he compared it to an aër of 1481 at the Putna Monastery. Which of the two he had in mind, Putna 65 (catalogue number 41) or Putna 85 (catalogue number 40), is unclear.²⁷⁰ The comparison is apt in either case especially because of the choice of background color and the palette of embroidered silk and gold thread. The style is quite different, simplified and with squat figures and awkwardly rendered evangelist symbols. On the other hand the decorative motif of flower-like stars is very similar to the 1490 Putna Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 44, figure 69). The motif seems to derive from the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36), which would have to have been in Moldavia no later than 1490, if the similarity is evidence of direct influence. I. D. Ștefănescu also compared the Aër of Princess Malina to the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios of 1506 (catalogue number 49, figure 80).²⁷¹ There are certain similarities, such as the presence of a pattern embroidered on the shroud—stripes on the Aër of Malina, checks on the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios—or the presence of a limited landscape in the lower zone (compare figures 49 and 81). The iconography of the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios, however, presents a more fully developed version of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography. If we were to assume that the two embroideries were made during the same period the difference in iconography could be explained as having to do with the difference in function. The more developed, narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography might be regarded as more appropriate for an epitaphios rather than an aër, but the two types of iconography might really have been interchangeable. Unless a “Princess Malina” can be positively identified, I cannot

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ See the discussion of catalogue numbers 40 and 41 for my attempt to clear away the confusion about these two embroideries.

²⁷¹ Berza, ed. *Cultura Moldovenească în Timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 491.

confidently suggest a narrower date range than 1427–1506 for this aër. Because the figural style and narrative iconography on the Aër of Princess Malina differs from other Moldavian aëres or epitaphioi of the early fifteenth century, it seems unlikely that “Malina” is identical to Marina the fourth wife of Alexandru cel Bun. For that reason, a date within the last quarter of the fifteenth century or the first decade of the sixteenth century (i.e. the period of Ștefan cel Mare) is more likely than an earlier date.

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28. (Figure 50–52)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery, Moldavia.²⁷²

205 x 155 cm.

1436.

National Museum of Art, Bucharest, Romania (Inventory number 1046 Tez).²⁷³

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery was given to the monastery at Neamț in September 1436 by the Hieromonk Siluan, the hegoumenos (abbot) of the monastery at the time. This was one of many objects taken from Romania to Russia after World War I.²⁷⁴ It was returned by the USSR in June 1956.²⁷⁵ The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery is now in the collection of the National Museum of Art in Bucharest. Gabriel Millet listed the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios with his group 2c, which included only one other embroidery, the 1489/90 Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare (catalogue number 44).²⁷⁶ While there are certain similarities in the iconography that seem to indicate that there was some influence of the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare at Putna, or that the two emulated a common source, the later embroidery includes John the Theologian, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nikodemus, figures not included on the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios. While Millet was not necessarily positing direct or indirect influence of the earlier embroidery on the later embroidery, his grouping these two together is nonetheless questionable on iconographic grounds. That the Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery includes the Virgin and Mary Magdalene but excludes even John the Theologian makes its variant of the Threnos iconography unique.

²⁷² I saw this textile at the National Museum of Art, Bucharest in July 2005.

²⁷³ Edinburgh Festival Society and the Arts Council of Great Britain in association with the Rumanian State Committee for Culture and the Arts, *Rumanian Art Treasures, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh and London, 1965–66), 26.

²⁷⁴ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 105.

²⁷⁵ G. Oprescu, in *Studii asupra tezaurului restituit de U. R. S. S.* Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romîne, 1958, pp. 9–14.

²⁷⁶ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

There are other details of this piece that seem either to have affected the corresponding details on later examples or to have derived from a lost common source. Regardless of how the details were transmitted from one to another—by copying earlier examples or by consulting a menu of decorative forms characteristic of each particular workshop—certain details turn up in Moldavian epitaphioi throughout the later fifteenth century. Whether the embroiderers in Moldavia tended to copy but expand upon aspects of earlier examples or the workshops of embroiderers in Moldavia fostered a strong tradition, building upon Serbian and Greek traditions but developing independently from them, the result would be a strongly distinctive Moldavian type. The Neamț Aër-Epitaphios is a key work in the development of that type.

The iconography of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery is a transitional step from the image of Christ as Amnos to the Epitaphios Threnos iconography that would already have been familiar in wall paintings. The figure of Christ lies upon the stone slab, the Virgin at his head. The Virgin only touches Christ's head with her right hand, her left hand held out in a gesture of lamentation. The contour lines in this figure are decorated with pearls (figure 51). At Christ's feet is a woman standing and pulling her hair. This means that we have the Virgin and one of the myrophoroi rather than John the Theologian. Also missing is any sign of the shroud, with the figure of Christ resting only the stone slab. The single mourning woman is usually interpreted as Mary Magdalene. The face of this figure is rendered in a particularly expressive style, with triangular areas of dark thread under her eyes (figure 52). The split stitch embroidery of her three-quarter-profile face also contributes expressive contour lines creating a spiraling cheekbone and a subtly furrowed forehead above very dark and heavy eyebrows. This figure is also outlined in pearls. Above Christ are two deacon-angels with

rhipidia. The rhipidia are decorated with images of six-winged seraphim. The arrangement of these figures evokes earlier embroideries such as the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11, figure 24) and the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30), but the basic Christ Amnos iconography—the figure of Christ with a pair of deacon-angels with rhipidia—had been used since the Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3). Below the figure of Christ are two more deacon-angels with rhipidia. Between them is a fifth angel holding its hands in a gesture of lamentation—one hand to its face, the other hand held out toward the picture plane. A decorative cross-in-circle motif occurs sixteen times within the central panel.

The abbreviation IC XC (Jesus Christ) appears just above Christ's head. The title O EΠΙΤΑΦΙΟC (The Epitaphios) appears between the two deacon-angels in the space just above the figure of Christ. The abbreviation MP ΘΥ (Meter Theou—Mother of God) appears just above the halo round the Virgin's head. In the corners are the evangelist symbols. Here we find two of the details that would occur on later Moldavian epitaphioi. In the upper left corner is the eagle representing John. The ox representing Luke is in the upper right. The winged man representing Matthew is in the lower right, and the lion representing Mark is in the lower left. Each of the symbols emanates from a series of concentric arcs embroidered, in this case, in blue and white thread. That in itself is not new. Other examples also show the evangelist symbols emerging from concentric arcs, such as the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11). On the Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery, however, the arcs are not in the corners as they are in other examples. Each corner is marked as a separate space from the central panel with an arc-shaped border. In the two upper evangelist symbols (John and Luke) the rainbow-arcs are

placed against the border arc and opposite the right-angle corner formed by the top and side borders of the whole epitaphios. In the two lower corners (Mark and Matthew), the rainbow-arcs are placed against the lower border of the whole epitaphios where it meets the border arcs that surround the corners. The evangelist symbols are represented as emerging from the rainbows, their heads pointing into the right-angle corners, and their faces turning back to look toward the central scene. This kind of treatment occurs in one corner (Matthew in the lower right) of the 1489/90 Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare (catalogue number 44).

The other aspect of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery that turns up in later Moldavian embroidery is the use of the words that introduce the Epinikion Hymn within the borders that separate the evangelist symbols from the rest of the central panel: in the upper left is the word ἈΔΟΝΤΑ (Singing) filling the arc around the eagle representing John; in the upper right is the word ΒΟΩΝΤΑ (crying) filling the arc around the ox representing Luke; in the lower left is the word ΚΕΚΡΑΓΟΤΑ (shouting) filling the arc around the lion representing Mark; and in the lower right are the words ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΟΝΤΑ (and saying) filling the arc around the winged man representing Matthew. This is a feature that had also been used on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Żółkiew Monastery (catalogue number 26). It is interesting to note, too, that the order in which the evangelists are presented is more consistent among Moldavian epitaphioi of the fifteenth century than we find at any other time or place before 1500. The Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 45) is an exception, in which the symbol for Matthew is in the lower left and the symbol for Mark in the lower right. The words “ἄδοντα, βοῶντα, κερραγότα, και λέγοντα” are not embroidered on that example. On the Neamț Aër-

Epitaphios each evangelist symbol is identified with an abbreviation: ICΘ (John), JIK (Luke), MPK (Mark), and MA (Matthew).

The border inscription is arranged awkwardly. It begins in the upper left corner and reads from left to right across the top. This part is a phrase from the Holy Saturday Orthos. It continues down the right side, with the letters still vertical as they were across the top. Almost halfway down the right side, after six lines of two or three letters each, a dash indicates that the inscription jumps to upper left corner in the left border where the dedicatory part of the inscription begins. The dedication continues in vertical letters in fourteen lines down the left border and then across the bottom almost to the lower right corner. It jumps again to the line under the dash in the right border where the last part of the dedication, the date, is given.

In the following transcription, a double slash (//) indicates a change from one side of the border to another, while a single slash (/) indicates breaks between lines within one side of the border.

+ ЖНВОТЕ ВЪ ГРОБѢ ПОЛОЖИСА ЕСИ ХЕ И АГГЛЪСКЛА
ВЄННЪСТВА 8ДНВННІАСА СЪХО//ЖД/ЕНН/Е ТВ/ОЕ С/ΛΔВ/ΔΠΕ /
— // СЪ/ТВО/РН/ЖЕ / СІН / ΔЕР/Ъ ІЕ/РО/МО/НА/ХЪ / СН/Λ8/ΔН //
НГ8МЕНЪ ѿ НѢМЦА ВЪ ДНН БАΔΓΟΥЪСТНВАΔΓΟ И ХΟΛΙΟΥΒΗΒΑΓΟ
ΙϞΔ СТЕΦΔНН ВЄЕВОΔΥІ // И СЪ/ВРЪ/ШН/СА / ВЪ / ΛѢ/ТО /
ϚSY/ME // M CΠT ΙΔ

(In a tomb they laid you, O Christ the life and the angelic hosts were overcome with awe, and glorified your condescension. The Hieromonachos Siluan, hegoumenos of Neamț, had this aēr made in the time of the pious and Christ-loving John Stephan Voivode, and it was finished in the year 6945, in the month of September on the eleventh.)

The John Stephen Voivode mentioned in the dedication was Stephen II (r. 1434–47), one of the voivodes of Moldavia during the tumultuous period between the reigns of his father, Alexander cel Bun (1400–1432), and his nephew, Stephen III the Great (Ștefan cel

Mare—whose reign began in 1457).²⁷⁷ The beginning of the border inscription, a phrase that had also been embroidered on the Chilandar Aër-Epitaphios 1 (catalogue number 6), comes from the Holy Saturday Orthros liturgy suggesting that this embroidery would have been intended for use as an epitaphios. The dedication refers to the object as an aër, using the loanword from Greek in an otherwise Slavonic dedication.

The date has been disputed because the final letter of the year may be read as either a theta or an epsilon. A theta gives the year 6949 (1440/1), an epsilon 6945 (1436/7). Émile Turdeanu saw the date 1441.²⁷⁸ Gabriel Millet pursued the dating question historically, considering which year would be more likely given the political situation at the time, and confirmed 1441.²⁷⁹ The approach is flawed, however, and either date is just as likely. As Pauline Johnstone noted, and as I was able to observe in 2005, the final character of the year was clearly meant to be an epsilon, which gives the year 1436/7.²⁸⁰ The date of completion is given as 11 September, which means that 6945 refers to 1436 and not 1437.

One final feature of the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios that should be noted is that the background has been completely embroidered with silk thread replacing the original background cloth. The thread is maroon now but might once have been of a more purple hue. Silk thread has been used also to fill in the background of the border but in a light blue. This technique for restoring the background by replacing it with embroidered silk thread has been used on the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66) among other examples.

²⁷⁷ Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de la romanité orientale*, volume 4.

²⁷⁸ Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 178–79, 205–05.

²⁷⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 105–06.

²⁸⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 122, note 69.

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29. (Figure 53)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți.²⁸¹

135 x 100 cm.²⁸²

Second third of the 15th century.

Museum of the Monastery of Sucevița.

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți is now in the museum of the Monastery of Sucevița. It has received relatively little scholarly attention. It might bolster the argument that the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemina and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17), which is now located at the Putna Monastery, was in Moldavia before the founding of Putna Monastery, but the reasoning about this topic can become circular, so we must be careful about what we try to conclude from this evidence. The iconography on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți is a simple variation on the figure of Christ as Amnos. The figure of Christ lies with his hands crossed over his waist. This is slightly different from the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemina and Eupraxia in which Christ's arms are crossed on his torso. On the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios four lamenting angels hover in the zone above Christ. They cover their faces and they are identified with abbreviations ΑΓΓ ΚΥ (Angel of the Lord). Three of these inscriptions survive at least partly intact. The abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ) is embroidered just above the halo around Christ's head, and the letters Ο ΩΝ (The One Who Exists) are embroidered in the arms of the cross within the halo. Below the figure of Christ are two six-winged seraphim, one with a nimbed face, one with no face. Between the seraphim is

²⁸¹ I saw this textile at the Museum of the Monastery of Sucevița in July 2005.

²⁸² Some sources give different dimensions for this work. C. Nicolescu gives 164 x 123, but that must include a cloth on which the original was mounted. I. Zugrav gave ca. 120 x 80. For the dimensions given here I follow M.A. Musicescu. Barnea, Iliescu, and Nicolescu, *Cultura bizantina în România*, 231; I. Zugrav, "Un epitaf din biserica Bogdan Vodă din Rădăuți," *Mitropolia Moldovei* 36, no. 5/6 (1960): 388; Musicescu and Draguț, *Broderia veche Românească*, 34; Musicescu, *La Broderie Médiévale Roumaine*, 34.

a throne—a set of linked, winged, multi-eyed rings. The space around the figures is filled with a flower-like star motif. The border is filled with a cross-in-circle motif alternating with a scrolling vine-like motif. There is no dedicatory inscription or any other inscription besides the abbreviations that identify Christ and the lamenting angels.

It is tempting to argue that, since the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios is very similar to the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia, and since the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia dates to the early fifteenth century, then the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios dates to the first half of the fifteenth century, therefore the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia was in Moldavia by the middle of the fifteenth century, in time to influence the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios. This would be begging the question, however, and all we can really conclude from the iconographic evidence is that one of these embroideries influenced the other or that both emulate a common source. The way around this problem, of course, is to consult other evidence. At least one other dated aër-epitaphios shares this kind of iconography, the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios of 1427/8 (catalogue number 26). This means that this iconographic type was known in Moldavia by 1427, but does it also suggest that the Serbian import (Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia) was in Moldavia by that time? That would be speculation, but it would explain how the iconography of a Moldavian aër-epitaphios of the second quarter of the fifteenth century could resemble the Serbian embroidery so closely.

Another piece of evidence that we cannot ignore is the resemblance of the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios to the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței of 1484 (catalogue number 42, figure 66). The size is the most obvious difference between these two embroideries, the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios being much larger. The absence of a hymn or dedication

inscription around the border, or anywhere else, also distinguishes the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios. The presentation of the figures is very close, however, including a quirk that seems to suggest that one copied the other: the two seraphim in the lower zone (i. e. next to Christ's right side) are presented as different from each other. The one on the right has a full face with a halo on both embroideries. The one on the left has only a hint of a face (on the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței) or no face at all (on the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios). The use of blue thread within the wings of the angels on both embroideries is also suggestive of influence or of a common workshop.

While it is possible to argue from such details that the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios must have influenced the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței, we cannot know which came first. Bogdan I founded the Church of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți in 1360s.²⁸³ We also know that the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios was made in 1484, and that the iconography of Christ as Amnos was already archaic, but not obsolete, by that time. It would be reasonable to assume that the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios is the more recent of these two very similar embroideries. This leaves us with a possible date range for the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios of ca. 1360 (the founding of the Church of St. Nicholas at Rădăuți) to 1484 (the date of the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios). We can probably narrow down that date range if we accept that theory that the presence of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia in Moldavia is likely to have influenced the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios, directly or indirectly, and that the earlier embroidery dates to the first decade of the fifteenth century. The similarity to the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios is also possible evidence, though not sufficient evidence, for narrowing down the date to the

²⁸³ Zugrav, "Un epitaf din biserica Bogdan Vodă din Rădăuți," 388.

period of the third decade of the fifteenth century at the earliest. Because of the similarities among Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia, the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios, and the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios, I would tentatively suggest a date of the second third of the fifteenth century for the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios. A close comparison of the embroidery techniques used on the Rădăuți Aër-Epitaphios to the techniques used on the other examples could be used to confirm or contradict that date.

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30. (Figure 54)

Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios, from the Monastery of Puchezhsk.²⁸⁴
255 x 175 cm.

1440/1.

State Historical Museum, Moscow (Inventory number TK-65).²⁸⁵

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Monastery of Puchezhsk is very similar to the Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery (catalogue number 31, figure 55). A. N. Svirin included them both among those embroideries that he attributed to a Novgorod School. The iconography is the same. The style is very similar, but not identical. It is likely that the same workshop if not the same embroiderers produced these two embroideries. The most obvious differences are minor details in the handling of figures and in the choices of color. In vibrant colors on a red background, the figures are even more elongated on the Puchezhsk Aër-Epitaphios than they are on the Khutinsk Aër-Epitaphios. The figure of Christ in particular is unusually attenuated and of a much larger scale compared to the other figures. The arrangement of the groups of figures are nearly identical on both embroideries, but the figures of the Virgin and John bend in slightly more dynamic, dramatic poses on the Puchezhsk Aër-Epitaphios.

Other than the color of the background cloth the other most noticeable difference is the inscription around the border. Lengthy, cramped, and heavily abbreviated, the inscription on the Puchezhsk Aër-Epitaphios includes a long variant of the hymn “Noble Joseph” followed by a dedication and more words spoken by the priest when the gifts are placed on the altar after the Great Entrance. The inscription begins in the lower left corner and runs counterclockwise along the bottom, up the right side, across the top, and

²⁸⁴ According to Liudmila Likhacheva, Puchezhsk is where this embroidery was rediscovered in 1939. Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery*, 189; Likhacheva, “Kentemata,” 245.

²⁸⁵ See <http://www.kreml.ru/en/main/collection/museum/cloth/> for a color photograph.

down the left side. The inscription is arranged around the border so that the tops of all the letters point inward to the central panel.

БЛАГОУБРАЗНЫИ ІОСНѢ СЪ ДРЕВА СНЕМЪ ПРЕУИ СТОЕ ТѢЛО
ТВОЕ ПЛАЩАНИЦЕЮ ЧИСТОЮ ОБВНВЪ И БЛАГООУХАНМН ВО
ГРОБѢ НОВѢ / ПОКРЫВЪ ПОЛОЖИ О ВЪ ТРЕИ ДНѢ ВЪСКРЕСЕС
ПАСЕ ДАРУЮ МИРОВИ ВЕЛИЮ МИЛОСТЬ / В ЛѢ 6949 СРАЖЕНЪ
БЫСЕТЬ ВЪЗДУХЪ СИ ПОВЕЛѢНЕМЪ ПРЕСВѢТАГО АРХИЕП
ПА ВЕЛИКОГО НОВАГОРОДА ВАКТИ ЕУФІМІЯ АМННЪ / ВЪ
ГРОБѢ ПАТЪСКТИН ВЪ АДЪ ЖЕ ВЪ ДШЕЮ ІАКО БЪ РАІ ЖЕ С РАЗ
БО И НИ МѢ ІНАПРТАЕБЪ ДШЕ ХЕ СЪ ѠЦ МЫ ДХОМЪ ВСАС
ПОЛЪНАДНЕѠПІЕ²⁸⁶

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices, taking upon himself its burial, laid it in a new grave, but you rose after three days granting the world the Great Mercy. In the year 6949 the Archbishop of Great Novgorod Euthymios commanded this aër to be made. Amen. +In the Grave with the body, but in Hades with the soul, as God; in Paradise with the Thief, and on the Throne with the Father and the Spirit, O Christ, uncircumscribed, filling all things.)

The content of the inscription would have been appropriate for either the Great Entrance or Holy Week or both. The hymn “Noble Joseph” was by this time used for both Good Friday and the Great Entrance. The dedication also tells us the date, 1441/2, and the name of the patron, Archbishop Euphemios. This is the same Archbishop Euphemios II of Novgorod (1429–58) as the Archbishop mentioned in the dedicatory inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34), which was a diplomatic gift from Grand Prince Basil II of Moscow. The styles of the two embroideries, that of Euphemios and that of Basil II, are clearly quite different, but A. N.

²⁸⁶ This inscription is very difficult to decipher, especially the last part in the left border. The transcription offered here is only a tentative, preserving the garbled end of the inscription, so I have not expanded abbreviations. The inscription is clear enough, however, to read the “Noble Joseph” and the dedication and to determine which part of the liturgy is quoted in the last section.

Svirin included them both among his “Novgorod School” of embroidery.²⁸⁷ I would suggest that we have instead two distinct groups: those associated with a Novgorod workshop, and those associated with Muscovite patronage. This idea is discussed in Chapter 3 of Part I.

The central panel of the Puchezhsk Aër-Epithaphios includes a limited Epithaphios Threnos iconography. It is essentially the iconography of Christ as Amnos with the added figures of the Virgin and John the Theologian. The figure of Christ lies on the stone slab with the Virgin holding his head and John holding his feet. The three figures are identified with abbreviated inscriptions: MP ΘΥ (Mother of God); ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ); ΙΩΘ ΘΕ (John the Theologian). In the four corners are the evangelist symbols emerging from concentric arcs of silk thread of various colors: ΙΩ (John) in the upper left; MAT (Matthew) in the upper right; ΛΥΚ (Luke) in the lower right; and ΜΑΡ (Mark) in the lower left. Behind the Virgin are two deacon angels. Two more stand behind John the Theologian. Each of the four angels holds a rhipidion decorated with the image of a six-winged seraph. Two lamenting angels hover in the space above Christ with the Sun and the Moon next to them. In the zone below Christ are two more angels with rhipidia. They kneel on either side of a candle. The composition is not crowded and the figures are grouped in clusters so that there is a great deal of plain cloth in the space around the figures.

Characteristic of the Novgorod group is the handling of the drapery. Deep contrasts in value create a chiaroscuro-like effect whether the dominant hue is blue, as in the cloth around Christ, or red, as the Virgin’s outer garment. Another feature common to

²⁸⁷ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit’e*, 29–40.

this embroidery and two other examples is the particular effect of creating feathers in the wings of the angels. The impression of peacock or pheasant feathers is created with arch-shaped areas of colored silk thread. This type of angel wing is also found on the Khutinsk Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 31, figure 55) and the Tikhvin Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 37, figure 62). Because of such similarities in the details of the embroidery style it is reasonable to group these aër-epitaphioi together as products at least of the same period and region, the area around Novgorod in the middle of the fifteenth century, if not also as products of the same workshop.

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31. (Figure 55)
Aër-Epithafios from the Khutinsk Monastery.
183 x 96 cm.
15th century.
Novgorod History and Art Museum-Reservation.

The Aër-Epithafios from the Khutinsk Monastery is one of the most striking of aër-epithafioi embroidered during the early to mid-fifteenth century. The composition is clear. The figure of Christ is monumental and elongated. The colors are bold with dramatic changes in hue and value. The figural style is relatively naturalistic, compared to many Russian embroideries. The Old Church Slavonic border inscription is embroidered in bold Cyrillic characters, the spacing of the characters emulating the spacing of the figures in the Epithafios Threnos iconography they surround. The iconography is identical to that of the Aër-Epithafios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30). Christ is on the stone slab with the seated Virgin holding his head. John the Theologian, standing on a footstool, holds Christ's feet. Four deacon-angels stand behind them, two behind the Virgin, two behind John. Each angel holds a rhipidion and they all face the center. Above this group are the sun and moon with two mourning angels between them. Below the slab are two angels with rhipidia, crouched as though kneeling, but seeming to float in midair on either side of a candle in a candelabrum. Each of the six rhipidia is decorated with a six-winged seraph. In each of the corners is one of the evangelist symbols projecting from concentric arcs of yellow and blue. Around the border, the inscription is embroidered in dark blue thread. There is a great deal of space surrounding the figures or groups of figures, and yet some of the figures overlap unexpectedly. For example, the wings and halos of the kneeling angels overlap the slab on which Christ lies, just as they do in the Aër-Epithafios of the

Archbishop Euphemios. Unlike the other example, however, the rhipidia at the top of the composition overlap the line that separates the central composition from the border.

The embroiderers in both cases (catalogue numbers 30 and 31) have made extensive use of variations in hue and value to create a sense of modeling that is unusual in other examples of Rus' embroidery. The cloth tied around Christ's waist, for example, includes highlights and shadow in various shades of blue, white, and yellow, an effect repeated in the drapery over the Virgin's legs. There is an almost convincing illusion of a directional light source, an effect that is even more successful in the light yellow on the shins of Christ. There are also light yellow highlights on the knuckles, the pectoral and abdominal muscles, and even one of the ankles of Christ. Such effects are also used, though to a lesser extent, in the faces of the other figures. The deep reds and lighter reds of the robes of the Virgin and John act as parentheses around the overwhelming yellows, browns, blues, and gold of the figure of Christ on the slab. Silver thread and silver-gilt thread are used sparingly compared to examples of the Moscow type.

There are five names embroidered within the center panel, the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ), and abbreviations for the names of the evangelists. In the upper left corner is ΙΩΑ (John). ΜΑΤΘΕΗ (Matthew) is in the upper right. ΛΟΥΣ (Luke) is in the lower right. ΜΑΡΚΟΣ (Mark) is in the lower left. Around the border is the hymn "Noble Joseph" in Old Church Slavonic.

БЛАГООБРАЗЪНЪИ ИЖСНФЪ СЪ ДРЕВА СЕМЪ ПРЕУИ / СТОЕ
ТЪЛО ТВОЕ ПЛАЩА/НИЦЕЮ УНСТОИА ОБВНВЪ И ВОНИАМИ ВО
ГРОБЪ / НОВЪ ПОКРЪИВЪ ПОЛОЖИ

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices, taking upon himself its burial, laid it in a new grave).

“Noble Joseph” was a hymn associated with Good Friday and Holy Saturday, as it still is, but which also transferred to the end of the Great Entrance when it is sung at the moment that the diskoi and chalices are transferred to the altar.²⁸⁸ The Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery is one of the earliest extant aër-epitaphios embroidered with the Slavonic version of “Noble Joseph.” The date of this aër-epitaphios is still later than the fourteenth-century introduction of “Noble Joseph” into the Great Entrance rites.²⁸⁹ We again face the question of whether this object was intended as an aër for the Great Entrance or as an epitaphios for Holy Week. The distinction, at that stage in the development of the two types of textile, may have been irrelevant, as discussed in Chapter 2 of Part I.

The dating of this example is based on evidence such as its dimensions, iconography, style, and technique. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery is longer (or more oblong) than is typical of examples of the type associated with patrons from Moscow such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34). It is actually narrower than any other extant, pre-1500 aër-epitaphios except the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 4, figure 10), which has a ratio of long side to short side of approximately 2.8:1, but the Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios is a unique example of a triptych consisting of panels that resemble an aër and two kalymmata. The ratio of long side to short side in the case of the Khutinsk Aër-Epitaphios (1.9:1) is comparable to but even longer than that of the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios (catalogue number 30), which has a ratio of long side to short side of approximately 1.5:1. This is relevant only because it reveals that the dimensions of the aër-epitaphioi associated with

²⁸⁸ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 218 and 46–48.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

Khutinsk, Puchezhsk, and Tikhvin (catalogue number 37) tend to confirm what the style and iconography also reveal. These three aër-epitaphioi are a distinct group from the Moscow group (catalogue numbers 20, 34, and 35). They are narrower, or more oblong, than those belonging to the group of embroideries associated with Muscovite patronage. The style and iconography of the Novgorod group are also distinguishable from the Moscow group.

The iconography of the Khutinsk Aër-Epitaphios is fairly simple and the composition is not crowded, characteristics it has in common with the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios from the Puchezhsk Monastery. The similarities between these two aër-epitaphioi allow us to date the Aër-Epitaphios from the Khutinsk Monastery to the same period as the Aër-Epitaphios of the Archbishop Euphemios, the mid-fifteenth century, and to group it among the Novgorod type as A. N. Svirin did.²⁹⁰ Svirin and other scholars have suggested that this and other embroideries were the products of an embroidery workshop founded by Euphemios, which is plausible, but too many embroideries may have been attributed to this workshop. I draw a distinction between the Novgorod type, represented by the Khutinsk Aër-Epitaphios, and the Moscow type, such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II, which Svirin also attributed to the Novgorod school. All these textiles could have been made at workshops in Novgorod. As discussed in Chapter 3 of Part I, my making this distinction has less to do with where they were made than with patronage, iconography, and style.

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²⁹⁰ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 33–34.

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32. (Figure 56)
Epitaphios of King George VIII.
192 x 158 cm.
1446–1466.
Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi.

The rich tradition of ecclesiastical embroidery in Georgia includes many epitaphioi, but only one extant epitaphios from before the end of the fifteenth century. The epitaphios of King George VIII is nonetheless typical of the Georgian tradition. Stitched in silk, silver-gilt, and silver thread, the colors are vibrant, although the dark blue backing cloth has deteriorated. The composition is crowded and includes an early example of the full Epitaphios Threnos or Lamentation scene, which is described in the inscription as the Entombment. Christ lies on the stone slab shown as a trapezoid with the short side down as though in reverse perspective. Full-length figures of angel-deacons with rhipidia stand at either end of Christ. The Virgin and John, shown from the waist up, stand behind Christ near his loincloth, hands to their faces in gestures of mourning, and two mourning women, also half-length figures, stand behind Christ's chest. Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemus are shown in full-length figures, Joseph bowing deeply over the shroud, crumpled before him, Nikodemus holding implements of the passion.

Additional scenes, not found on epitaphioi outside the Georgian tradition, are embroidered in the zones above and below the central image of the Epitaphios Threnos. In the upper zone is the ascension, Christ on a throne within a diamond-shaped mandorla held aloft by two angels. In the lower zone, from left to right, are St. Peter, four soldiers guarding the tomb, and two women at the tomb. The tomb with the soldiers is represented by a richly embroidered square that looks like a carpet guarded by four soldiers. Each soldier has a spear and a shield. The two at the left and right sides are vertical, the two at

the top and bottom are horizontal with their heads pointing to the left side of the composition. Two women are shown approaching a separate representation of the tomb. They carry jars of spices. An angel standing on a trapezoidal, carpet-like representation of the stone from the door to the tomb confronts the women and points at them. A variant of this part of the narrative is related in all four of the canonical Gospels, but the version represented here accords most closely with Matthew 28:1–7, although Matthew does not mention the spices. Images of six-winged seraphim decorate the rhipidia of the deacons. The design is repeated five times in the zone below the slab. Four thrones are included in the composition, two on either side of the ascension, one below the head of Christ, and one below Christ's feet. The remaining decorative motif, a cross-in-circle design, appears scattered throughout the central panel.

The border is filled with an elaborate design of an acanthus leaf motif with alternating crosses and portrait busts of saints. The evangelist symbols take up the corners of the central panel. They are identified by inscriptions and surrounded by heavily embroidered, arc-shaped borders. Matthew (ἄγγελος ἁγίος)²⁹¹ is in the upper left, with John (ἰωάννης) in the upper right, Mark (μαρκῆς) in the lower right, and Luke (λούκας) in the lower left. The inscriptions for Mark and Luke are damaged and difficult to make out. Above the head of Christ is another inscription in Georgian asomtavruli xucuri characters (the majuscule of the old ecclesiastical alphabet) and in Greek: ἸΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ / Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ / ΤΗΣ ΔΟΞΗΣ (Jesus Christ, King of Glory). This is similar to the inscriptions on two Athonite aër-epitaphioi in the treasuries of the Vatopaidi and Pantokrator monasteries (catalogue numbers 7 and 8), but the complex narrative iconography on the Epitaphios of

²⁹¹ ἁγίος or მ(ა)ნ(ა)რ(ობელო)=“evangelist.”

The dedicatory inscription along the top of the central panel tells us who commissioned the embroidery. It also refers to the central scene as the Entombment, rather than the Epitaphios Threnos, which is characteristic of Muscovite examples of roughly the same iconography such as an aër-epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, now in the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35). My transcription of the dedicatory inscription on the Aër-Epitaphios of King George VIII follows Vaxtang Berize's transcription.²⁹²

With the abbreviations expanded (and in the contemporary Georgian mxedruli alphabet):

(Long live King Alexander the Great's son King George, may God forgive his sins, by whose order this Entombment of our Savior Jesus Christ was made).²⁹³

²⁹² Vaxtang Berize et al., *The Treasures of Georgia* (London: Century Publishing, 1984), 13.

²⁹³ I am grateful to Dodona I. Kiziria, professor emeritus in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University Bloomington, for helping me with the translation of this inscription.

²⁹⁴ Kalistrat Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, trans. Katharine Vivian, 2nd ed. (Paris: Orientaliste, 1983), 243.

unsuccessfully tried to arrange a marriage between his daughter and Constantine XI, the last Byzantine emperor.²⁹⁵ Ketevan Davitishvili relates a legend about the Aër-Epitaphios of George VIII according to which Shah Abbas, presumably Abbas I (1587–1689), looted the epitaphios, took it with him to Persia, and used it as a horse blanket, but an epidemic convinced him that he should return it along with other gifts.²⁹⁶ If there is any truth to this legend, the epitaphios fared remarkably well.

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²⁹⁵ Ibid., 246.

²⁹⁶ Ketevan Georgnevna Davitishvili, *Drevnegruznskaia Vyshivka* (Tbilisi: Khelovneba, 1973), n.p., catalogue number III.

33. (Figure 57)
Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka.²⁹⁷
183 x 124.5cm.
1449.
Novgorod Integrated Museum-Reservation (ДРТ 20).

The Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka is unusual because of its spare iconography, which resembles the iconography on the Bachkovo Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 11, figure 24). The figure of Christ lies on the Stone of Unction with four deacon-angels holding rhipidia and bowing behind Christ. Most Russian examples of the fifteenth century, whether of the Novgorod type (for example, catalogue number 30, figure 54) or the Moscow type (catalogue number 20, figure 39, for example), also include the Virgin and John and sometimes other figures. Julia Komarova has correctly pointed out that the Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka is the earliest extant Rus' example of the purely "liturgical" type of aër-epitaphios.²⁹⁸ The figures fill the composition of the Shemiaka embroidery. Embroidered in rich yellows and reds, with flesh-colored silk for the body of Christ and the faces and hands of the angels, this aër-epitaphios has little gold and silver, which is reserved for halos, rhipidia, and the loincloth. The initials ΙΣ ΧΣ appear at Christ's shoulders, and the abbreviation Ο ΩΝ (The One Who Exists) is embroidered within the cross arms of the cruciform halo around Christ's head.

The Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka has been heavily reworked. Silk thread and gold embroidery have been added to damaged parts of the original. An nineteenth-century border with busts of saints in medallions has been added, as have the

²⁹⁷ I saw this textile in April 2004 at the exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

²⁹⁸ Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 318.

evangelist symbols in medallions in the corners of the border. The green silk outer border with the inscription also seems to be a later addition although it recreates the original inscription as recorded by Bishop Amvrosii in 1815.²⁹⁹ The inscription begins in the lower left and runs counterclockwise all the way around the narrow, green border. The inscription does not include any hymn. It is only a long dedication:

В лѣт ѿсѣиꙋ ннѣикѣа зъ какъ былѣ велнкн кнзѣ Димитрин Юрїевнꙋ в
Велнкм Новѣгородѣ н повеленїем белнкаго кнза наражен высть сїн
въздѡхъ въ храмъ стаго велнкомꙋнка Гесѡргїа / того же лѣта мца авгѡста
въ кг днь бжговѣрною него велнкою кнгннїю Софїею н при снѡ
бжговѣрном кнзѣ Нванѣ / положенъ бы въ цркви стаго велнкомꙋнка
Хрстова Гесѡргїа в Велнкм Новѣгородѣ в Юрїевѣ монастырѣ при
архіепкпѣ Велнко Новгородѣ Евѡнмїи при архмандрнтѣ Мїсанлѣ / за
сѡставленїе грѣховъ нспасенїа радн дшѣ нашн н нашн дѣтем н внꙋчѡтам
нправнꙋчѡтам в семѣ вѣщѣ н в бждѡщем. Амннѣ.

(In the year 6957 [1449], indiction seven, as Grand Prince Demetrius Iurievich was in Great Novgorod, at the Grand Prince's behest the present aër was made at the Temple of the Holy and Great Martyr George on the 23rd day of August of the same year by his pious Grand Princess Sophia, and at the time of [their] son the pious Prince Ivan it was dedicated to the Church of Christ's Holy and Great Martyr George at the Iuriev Monastery in Great Novgorod at the time of Euphemios, archbishop of Great Novgorod [and] of the Archimandrite Misael, for the remission of sins, and for the sake of the salvation of our souls and of those of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, in this age and the one to come. Amen).³⁰⁰

Demetrius Iur'evich, or Dmitrii Shemiaka, was involved in the dynastic wars with Basil II.³⁰¹ Basil II, Shemiaka's rival, also presented an embroidered aër-epitaphios to Euphemios, the archbishop of Novgorod (catalogue number 34). This textile fits into neither of the two categories of Russian textiles of this period, the Novgorodian or Muscovite (discussed in Chapter 3 of Part I). It is rather a unique example that might be

²⁹⁹ Bishop of Penza and Saratov Amvrosii, *Istoriia rossiskoi ierarkhii*, 6 vols. (Moscow: Sinodal'nyi, 1810-1822), 172; Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 318.

³⁰⁰ This translation is adapted from the one provided by Julia Komarova. Evans, ed. *Faith and Power*, 317–18.

³⁰¹ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 268–70.

taken as evidence of a separate workshop. The inscription refers to the object offered as an aër (вѣздах) as do other Rus' examples of the period, such as the St. Sophia Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34), which means that the term was applied to examples with either the "liturgical" type of iconography (Christ as Amnos) or the "narrative" type of iconography (the Epitaphios Threnos). It was also embroidered on textiles with other types of iconography, such as the aër with the Mandyllion in the State Historical Museum in Moscow (catalogue number 14). The inscription of the Shemiaka aër-epitaphios is unusual, however, for the precision of its date and the length of its dedication.

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34. (Figure 58)
Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod.
193 x 153.5 cm.
1451/2 or 1455/6.
Novgorod Museum (Inventory number 2130).

The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod, also belongs among the group associated with Moscow, including the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I (catalogue number 20). The aër-epitaphioi in this group, or at least their patrons, may be associated with Moscow, although some scholars have believed that these aër-epitaphioi were made in Novgorod.³⁰² Demetrios Pallas also grouped the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia with others bearing the text of the hymn “Let all mortal flesh be silent,” (“Σιγησάτω πᾶσα σὰρξ βροτεία” in Greek, and beginning “Да δμολуѣтъ” in the Slavonic versions embroidered on the two fifteenth-century Russian examples listed in this catalogue).³⁰³ The other example Pallas cited from the period before 1500 is the Wallachian Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15), although another example of the same iconographic type and with the same hymn around the border is in the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35). Some sixteenth-century examples also feature this hymn in their border inscriptions, including the Bloomington Epitaphios of 1534/5 (figure 96).

The iconography on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia is very much like that of the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I. Christ lies on a shroud across the center of the composition. The Virgin sits on the left side and embraces Christ’s head. John, on the right, holds Christ’s feet. Two mourning angels hover above the whole scene,

³⁰² Lazarev, “Die Malerei und die Skulptur Nowgorods,” 55–206; Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit’e*, 29–40.

³⁰³ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 800.

alternating with the sun and the moon. Four deacon-angels with rhipidia occupy the space just above Christ. The rhipidia, from left to right, are decorated either with images of six-winged seraphim or with the trisagion (ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ). Below the figure of Christ are two more angels with rhipidia. They kneel, facing each other, and the triangular space between them is filled with the dedicatory inscription. An evangelist symbol fills each corner, John in the upper left, Matthew in the upper right, Luke in the lower right, and Mark in the lower left. Just above the figure of Christ is a ciborium with a lamp. The initials ΙΣ ΧΣ appear within the ciborium. The initials ΜΡ ΘΥ (Meter Theou) are embroidered in the space just above Christ's chest to identify the Virgin. Embroidered above the body of Christ is the title ΡΥΙΔΑΝΙΕ ΝΑ ΓΡΟΒΝΟΕ (Lamentation at the Grave), the Slavonic version of the title "Epitaphios Threnos."

In each corner of the border is a six-winged seraph. The inscription around the border begins in the lower left corner. It runs clockwise:

+ΔΑ ΣΜΟΛΥНТЬ ВСАКА ПЛОТЬ УΛВУА Н ДА СТОНТЬ СТРАХОМЪ Н ТРЕПЕТОМЪ Н
 ННУЪТО ЖЕ ЗЕ/МНАГО ВСОБѢ ДА ПОМЪШЛАСЕΤЬ ЦРЬ БО ЦРСТВУЮЩНМЪ Н ГСЬ
 ГСТВУЮЩНМЪ ХСЬ БѢ НАШЪ ПРОИСХОДНТЬ ЗАКЛАНТСА Н ДАТНСА В СНѢД
 ВѢ/НЫМЪ ПРЕДЪНДУТЬ ЖЕ СЕМУ ЛНЦН АГГѢЛЪСТНН СО ВСѢМН НАУАЛЫ І
 ВЛАСТМН І МНО/УНТАА ХЕРУВНМЪ Н ШЕСТОКРЫЛАТНАА СРАӨНМЪ ЛНЦА
 ЗАКРЫВАЮЩЕ Н ВОПІЮЩЕ ПѢ АЛНΛΔΝΑ ΑΛΗΛΟΥΑ ΑΛΗΛΟΥΑ ΖΥЪ

(Let all mortal flesh be silent and stand in fear and trembling considering nothing of this earth. For the King of kings and Lord of lords Christ our God comes to be slaughtered and given as food to the faithful. Before Him go the choirs of angels with all the principalities and powers, the cherubim with many eyes, and the six-winged seraphim covering their faces and crying the hymn: alleluia alleluia alleluia ζυъ).

I have been unable to decipher the last three letters in this inscription, but the rest is a standard version, with a few variant spellings, of the hymn "Let all mortal flesh be silent." In this case, it becomes clear that the iconography is presented as an illustration

of the hymn embroidered around the border. This hymn was, at the time this embroidery was made, an optional replacement for the Cherubikon for Holy Saturday Orthros, but is now the standard Cherubikon for Holy Saturday.³⁰⁴

Between the angels with rhipidia below the body of Christ is a gold embroidered inscription. Much of it is legible, though the embroiderers made liberal use of abbreviations, and seem to have run out of room near the bottom of this space where the letters are cramped and the gold embroidery is also badly worn. Nevertheless, the gist of the inscription is clear enough. Working from photographs, I have transcribed what I have been able to discern, but between the square brackets in this transcription I revert to the modernized transcription of A. N. Svirin.³⁰⁵ The part within the square brackets is not missing, but it is difficult to read.

В ЛѢТѢ ҃2Ц҃Ѣ ДЕ МАСТЮ БѢЮ / СІН ВЗДУХ СЪЗДАН БЫС БЛГО/ВѢРНЫ ВЕЛНКНМ
КНѢЗМ ВАСН/АНЕМ ВАСНЛѢВНУЕМ ВСЕА РУСН Н СѢНОМ / ЕГО ВЕЛНКНМ КНАЗЕМ
НВАНОМ ВАСНЛѢВІ/УЕМ Н БЛГОВѢРНОЮ ВЕЛНКОЮ КНАГННЕЮ / Марьею
НСЫНОМ НХ БЛАГРОДНЫ КНАЗЕМ / ЮРНЕМ ВАСНЛѢВНУЕМ В ДОМ СѢТІА СОФІА
ПРМДРОСТН / БЖ҃Ы В ВОТЧИНѢ ВЕЛНХ КНАЗЕ ВАСНЛА / [НВАНА Н ЮРНѢ В
ВЕЛНКНЙ НОВГОРОД ПРЕОСВѢЩЕННОМУ АРХНЕПИСКОПУ / ВЛАДЫКЕ] ЕВФНМНЮ.

(In the year 6960 from holy charity this aër was created and placed by the pious Grand Prince of all Rus' Vasilii Vasilievich and his son Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich and the pious Grand Princess Maria and their son the noble Prince Iurii Vasilievich in the church of Saint Sophia of the Holy Wisdom at the order of the grand princes Vasily, Ivan, and Iurii in great Novgorod as an offering to the archbishop abbot Euphemios.)

Svirin read the date, ҃2Ц҃Ѣ (6960), as 1451/2.³⁰⁶ Kondakov and Ainalov seem to have interpreted the opening of the inscription as “В ЛЕТО ҃2Ц҃Ѣ Д Е МНЛОСТЬЮ...”³⁰⁷ In

³⁰⁴ Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 76–77.

³⁰⁵ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*, 34.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 268; Ainalov, *Geschichte der russischen monumentalkunst*, 121.

this case the date ҃2II҃А (6964) would convert to 1455/6, a no less appropriate date for the reign of Basil II, but this date leaves the character “E” without explanation, albeit no more difficult to interpret in this context than the word “AE” left by Svirin’s interpretation. Svirin dated this aër-epitaphios to 1452, while Kondakov and Ainalov saw 1456, but either date means that this piece was made in the 1450s during the reign of Basil II, the grand prince of Moscow. Basil II is the Vasilii Vasilievich mentioned in the inscription. This was a period of war and consolidation of power for Basil II. The dynastic war ended in 1456, but Basil had attacked Novgorod in 1441, and he attacked Novgorod again in 1456.³⁰⁸ Events in either 1451/2 (a period of relative peace with Novgorod) or 1455/6 (a period of war with Novgorod) might help to explain the gift of this particular aër-epitaphios if we assume that it was given as a diplomatic gift to make one or more political announcements. Basil II certainly would have had good reason to try to appease archbishop Euphemios. This possibility discussed in Part I, Chapter 4.

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³⁰⁸ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 270.

- 19 have been transposed.)
- Kondakov, Nikodim Pavlovich. *Pamjatniki christianskago iskusstva na Athonje*. St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1902, p. 268.
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- Svirin, Aleksei Nikolaevich. *Drevnerusskoe shit'e*. Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963, p. 34, illustration on page 39.

35. (Figures 59–60)
Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum.
178 x 133 cm.
Second half of the 15th century.
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg (ДРТ 280).

This aër-epitaphios was acquired in 1938 by the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.³⁰⁹ It had been in the Stieglitz Museum in the same city. It is one of a group of similar aër-epitaphioi associated with the grand princes of Moscow. The earliest example of this type is the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil I (catalogue number 20, figures 39 and 40), also in the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. The most similar among this group to the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum is the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod, now in the Novgorod Museum (catalogue number 34, figure 58). The similarities are obvious: essentially the same iconography, the same hymn around the border, and an inscription in the triangular space between the two angels at the bottom. While the iconography is recognizably similar to that of the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod, there are a few differences. The most obvious difference is in the ciborium. It is notable because of its relatively large size compared to those on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia and the Aër-Epitaphios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk (catalogue number 22, figure 43). It extends from the shroud almost to the top border. The composition of this embroidery is more crowded in general than the others of its kind. The ciborium on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum is also more elaborate, with a peaked cupola topped by a cross. Three lamps hang within the ciborium, and a bird within a circle and with a nimbus behind its head perches above the lamps and below the cupola.

³⁰⁹ Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery*, 252.

The ciborium is one of the most obvious differences. Perhaps the most significant difference in the iconography of this aër-epitaphios from the others of this group is the addition of two more figures. Two bearded figures bow behind the shroud. Only their heads, shoulders, and backs are visible. On the left, just above Christ's chest is a white-bearded figure, identified as IOΣΙ, an abbreviation almost certainly meant to identify this figure as Joseph of Arimathea. The other additional figure is posed in much the same way as Joseph, but facing the other direction so that the two are symmetrically deployed. They face toward the center of the composition. The second figure is not identified with an inscription that I have been able to discern, but it probably meant to represent Nikodemus. Joseph and Nikodemus are not usually present in the Epitaphios Threnos iconography of embroidered aër-epitaphioi until the late fifteenth century. If the example from the Stieglitz Museum dates from the same period as the others of its kind, the mid-fifteenth century, then it is the earliest extant example of this more populous representation of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. There are no mourning women—i.e. the myrrophoroi such as those on the Aër-Epitaphios of Jovan and Syropoulos at Chilandar ("Chilandar 2," catalogue number 19, figure 38)—so the Stieglitz Museum aër-epitaphios is still only a transitional type of iconography that adds more figures from the Epitaphios Threnos iconography but remains essentially an image of Christ as Amnos.

The other figures in this example are the Virgin embracing Christ's face, although she is not identified with an inscription; John the Theologian holding Christ's feet, also not identified; two lamenting angels near the top border; and six deacon-angels. The two mourning angels at the top alternate with the sun and the moon. Four of the deacon-angels are arrayed symmetrically behind the central group of figures. Each holds a

rhipidion, and each of the rhipidia is decorated with a six-winged figure. None of the rhipidia is embroidered with the words ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΣ such as we find on the Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58). On the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, the two angels at the left and right edges of the group have rhipidia topped with plain circular shapes, while the other four rhipidia have triangular corners added to the circles. The two remaining deacon-angels kneel facing each other at the bottom of the composition, with a triangular space between them filled with an inscription. Some of the figures overlap, which could have been confusing at the right side where John stands in front of an angel, but the embroidery here is quite sophisticated. Areas of gold thread and silver thread are alternated to represent two layers in the drapery worn by John so that his body is distinguished from the body of the angel behind him. The elaborate embroidery creates a highly textured effect. Each halo, for example, is embroidered with its own pattern of couching. The background, in the spaces around the figures and inscriptions, is filled in with diverse shapes, such as dots and flower-like stars. In each corner of the border is a six-winged seraph.

The border inscription begins in the lower left corner, above one of the seraphim, and continues clockwise:

+ДА МОЛЧНТЬ ВСАКА ПЛОТЬ ЧЛВЧНА Н ДА СТОНСЪ СТРАХОМ Н ТРЕПЕТОМ Н ННУТО
 ЖЕ ЗЕ/МНАГО ДА ПОМЪЩАЕ Н СЕВЪ ЦРЬ БО ЦРСТВУЮЩНМ Н ГТЬ
 ГТСЬСТВУЮЩНМ · ХСЪ БГЪ НАШЪ · ПРОНСХОДН ЗАКЛАНИСЯ Н ДАТНСЯ В СНЪДЪ
 ВЪРНЪМ / ПРЕДЪНДУТЬ ЖЕ СЕМЪ ЛНЦА АГГЪЛЬСТНН СО ВСЪМН НАЧАЛЫ Н
 ВЛАСТЪМН МНОГО/ВУНТАА ХЕРУВНМ Н ШЕСТОКРЫЛАТНАА СЕРАФНМ ЛНЦА
 ЗАКРЫВАЮЩЕ Н ВОПИЮЩЕ ПЪСНЪ АНЛОУНЪ АНЛОУНЪ АНЛОУНЪ.

(Let all mortal flesh be silent and stand in fear and trembling considering nothing of this earth. For the King of kings and Lord of lords Christ our God comes to be slaughtered and given as food to the faithful. Before Him go the choirs of angels

with all the principalities and powers, the cherubim with many eyes, and the six-winged seraphim covering their faces and crying the hymn: alleluia alleluia alleluia.)

By the fifteenth century this hymn was an alternative Cherubikon for the Holy Saturday Orthros. It is now the standard Cherubikon for that day. Again, the iconography is presented as a kind of illustration of the hymn around the border. The treatment of the iconography as an illustration of a narrative might help to explain the addition of Joseph and Nikodemus.

Between the two angels with rhipidia in the zone below the figure of Christ is this inscription:

ΠΑ ΓΡΟΒΗΟΕ ΡΥΙΔΑΝΗΕ / ΑΓΙΟΣ + Α ΘΕΟΣ + ΑΓΙΟΣ + / ΗΣΧΙΡΟΣ +
ΑΓΙΟΣ + ΑΤΑ/ΝΑΤΟΣ + (Ε)ΛΕΗΣΟΝ ΗΜΑΣ

(The Lamentation at the Grave. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us).

This is the title of the iconography, in Slavonic, followed by the Trisagion in Greek. More inscriptions appear in the zone above Christ. Along the top, just inside the border, is this inscription in Greek: ΜΝΗΣΘΗΤΙ ΜΟΥ ΚΕ ΟΤΑΝ ΕΛΘΗΣ (εἰς) ΕΝ ΤΗ(ν) ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙ(αν) ΣΟΥ (Remember me, O Lord, when you come into your kingdom). This is from Luke 23:42, and is the sentiment that serves as the model for the memorial type of dedicatory inscription such as the one on the Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios of Heracleia (catalogue number 18, figure 37). On that aër-epitaphios, however, both the passage from Luke, in a longer version, and a dedicatory inscription were included in the embroidery. On the Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, we have only the passage from Luke and no dedicatory inscription. Just to the left of the moon we find this inscription: Ο ΕΠΗΤΑ/ΦΙΟΣ ΘΡΗΝ/ΟΣ (ἐπιτάφιος θρήνος or Lamentation). This is a curious feature

since the title therefore appears on this embroidery in both Greek and Slavonic. The letters ΓΑΗ are embroidered next to the deacon-angel just behind Christ's head. The figure crouching just above Christ's chest, as already mentioned, is identified as ΙΟΣΙ, an abbreviation presumably for Joseph of Arimathea. Just above the shoulder of Joseph of Arimathea is the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ (Jesus Christ). Two inscriptions remain that identify the evangelist symbols on the right side of the embroidery: ΜΑΤΘΕΟ at the top, and ΑΔΚΑ at the bottom. The inscriptions, if they ever existed, for the other two evangelist symbols (John in the upper left corner, and Mark in the lower left corner) were probably on the parts of the backing cloth that are now damaged.

Because there is no dedicatory inscription, it is difficult to date this embroidery. Its similarity to the others mentioned, all of the mid-fifteenth century, suggests that we can appropriately assign this aër-epitaphios to the same general period. The iconography, however, with the addition of Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemus, suggests that it could be slightly later than the others. Nevertheless, we can plausibly deduce a date within the second half of the fifteenth century from the iconography and inscriptions. A more precise date could be verified by close analysis of the embroidery technique (see Chapter 3 of Part I).

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36. (Not illustrated)
Epitaphios (?) of Princess Elena and Prince Mikhail Andreevich.
Late 15th century.
Present whereabouts unknown.

In 1902, N. P. Kondakov described a great epitaphios in Borispol, embroidered on scarlet satin.³¹⁰ Kondakov also mentioned that a photograph of this epitaphios had been published in 1897.³¹¹ Gabriel Millet mentioned this epitaphios in 1916, but had apparently seen only the photograph in the publication mentioned by Kondakov.³¹² These are the only references that I have been able to find to this epitaphios, and I have not yet been able to locate a copy of the publication with the photograph. I have also been unable to determine whether this epitaphios is still extant. Kondakov, however, briefly described this textile. After extolling it as a remarkable example of embroidery, he described it as bearing scenes of the Deposition, the Entombment, and the Anastasis. “Entombment” here probably refers to the iconography usually called “Epitaphios Threnos” in Greek. There is at least one other example of the Deposition and the Epitaphios Threnos embroidered together on an epitaphios, the Romanian Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino from the Cotroceni Monastery embroidered in 1679/80 (now in the National Museum of Art, Bucharest—see figure 132).

The title Kondakov used, translated here as “Entombment,” was “Положение во гробъ.”³¹³ This was the analogous Slavonic title for the iconography called “Entaphiasmos” in Greek. “Epitaphios Threnos,” (Lamentation) is sometimes replaced in

³¹⁰ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 268.

³¹¹ Imperatorskoe russkoe arkheologicheskoe obshchestvo, *Trudy bos'maio Arkheologicheskago siezda v Moskvia* 4 (1897): plate 38.

³¹² Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV, XV, et XVI siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont Athos* (1916, Paris, Fontemoing. Reprint, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1960), 515.

³¹³ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 268.

Greek with “Entaphiasmos,” which means “Entombment” (as on the Stavronikita Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 10, figure 23; or the 1490/1 Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare—catalogue number 44, figure 69). The two titles were used interchangeably on epitaphioi, although the iconography in wall paintings could be distinct from each other, either the Entombment or the Epitaphios Threnos. At least one embroidered aër-epitaphios (Patmos 2—catalogue number 39, figure 64) used the title “Ἡ Ἀποκαθήλωσις [Apokathelosis]” (Deposition) in place of either “Entombment” or “Lamentation.” In the 1568 cycle of wall paintings in the Dochiariou Katholikon at Mount Athos all three titles appear with distinct iconography appropriate to of each scene as episodes in the narrative of the Passion (figures 128–129). Both “Entombment” (Положение во гробъ) and “Lamentation” (Рыданіе на Гробное) are found as titles on Slavonic epitaphioi. “Рыданіе на Гробное” is embroidered, for example, on an epitaphios in Novgorod (catalogue number 34, figure 58) and an epitaphios in St. Petersburg (catalogue number 35—on which the words are reversed as “На Гробное Рыданіе”—figure 59). The earliest use of the title on an embroidered aër-epitaphios is found on the Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (catalogue number 6, figure 17).

Kondakov did not describe the iconography on the Epitaphios of Princess Elena and Prince Mikhail Andreevich beyond naming the titles of the scenes embroidered on it. He lamented the poor condition of the epitaphios, but the 1897 photograph revealed enough for Millet to compare the iconography of the Borispol Aër-Epitaphios to the fresco painting of the Epitaphios Threnos in the fourteenth-century Church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Mistra (figures 149–150).³¹⁴ The features of the iconography that the

³¹⁴ Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*, 515.

epitaphios shares with the fresco, according to Millet, are the rocks that frame the background, the walls of Jerusalem between the rocks, the Cross rising in the center of the composition as though in the middle ground between the foreground figures and the background cityscape, Nikodemus, and the three lamenting women. These features became standard motifs found in variations of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography on embroidered epitaphioi during the sixteenth century and later. The Bloomington Epitaphios (figure 96) and the Aër of the Voivode Neagoe Bășăraib (figure 151) each presents some of the features that Millet mentioned.

Although he did not provide a transcription of the inscriptions on the Epitaphios of Princess Elena and Prince Mikhail Andreevich, Kondakov did report what the dedication inscription said. According to Kondakov, the dedication indicates that Princess Elena had the epitaphios made in memory of Prince Mikhail Andreevich for the monastery of the Archangel Michael. This is presumably the Prince Mikhail Andreevich of Vereia who died in 1486, a cousin of Basil II and the only prince with whom the grand prince shared power at the time of Basil's death in 1462.³¹⁵ Mikhail Andreevich's wife, Elena, is reported to have been cured three times by Kirill of Beloozero, which indicates a close relationship between the prince and the church, especially the Kirillo-Belozerskii monastery.³¹⁶ In 1478 Ivan III, Basil II's son and successor, forced Mikhail Andreevich to

³¹⁵ Janet Martin, "The Emergence of Moscow (1359–1462)," in *From Early Rus' to 1689*, ed. Maureen Perrie (vol. 1, *The Cambridge History of Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177.

³¹⁶ Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 36, 105.

give up jurisdiction over the monastery and the Beloozero district.³¹⁷ Kondakov's date of 1480 for the epitaphios may be an error. The dedication, as described by Kondakov, could be interpreted as indicating that the epitaphios was made after the death of Mikhail Andreevich in 1486. If the Aër-Epitaphios of Mikhail Andreevich can be located, it will number among a group from this period associated with Basil I (catalogue number 20) and the three cousins Basil II of Moscow (catalogue number 34), his rival Dmitrii Shemiaka (catalogue number 33), and Mikhail Andreevich of Vereia.

References:

- Imperatorskoe russkoe arkheologicheskoe obshchestvo. *Trudy bos'maio Arkheologicheskago si'ezda v Moskvia* 4 (1897): plate 38.
- Kondakov, Nikodim Pavlovich. *Pamjatniki christianskago iskusstva na Athonje*. St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1902, p. 268.
- Millet, Gabriel. *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV, XV, et XVI siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont Athos*. 1916, Paris, Fontemoing. Reprint, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1960, p. 515.

³¹⁷ Donald Ostrowsky, "The Growth of Muscovy (1462–1533)," in *From Early Rus' to 1689*, ed. Maureen Perrie, *The Cambridge History of Russia* (vol. 1, The Cambridge History of Russia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224.

37. (Figure 62)
Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin.
110.5 x 68.5 cm.
Mid-15th century.
State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg (ДРТ 195).

The Tikhvin Aër-Epitaphios survives as a heavily restored fragment. Restorations were undertaken in 1933 and 1964 at the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.³¹⁸ In its current state most of the figures survive, but there are no inscriptions. The figure of Christ lies on a stone slab with the Virgin holding his head and John the Theologian holding his feet. Two angels stand behind the Virgin, another pair behind John. They hold rhipidia, but the upper parts of the fans have been lost. Two angels kneel below the figure of Christ. They also hold fragmentary rhipidia. A ciborium with a lamp stands above the body of Christ. Two lamenting angels hover above the ciborium. The evangelist symbol for John (i.e. the eagle) has been preserved from the upper left corner where it emerges from concentric arcs of white and blue thread. The figures have been remounted on a backing cloth of roughly the same color as the original yellow silk background that is preserved in patches around the figures.

The obvious similarities in style to the aër-epitaphioi from Puchezhsk and Khutinsk (catalogue numbers 30 and 31 in this list, figures 54 and 55 respectively) associate the Tikhvin Aër-Epitaphios with the Novgorod group described by A. N. Svirin.³¹⁹ The most important difference between the Tikhvin Aër-Epitaphios and those from Puchezhsk and Khutinsk is the presence of the ciborium. The ciborium is a feature the Tikhvin embroidery shares with the group associated with Muscovite patronage, such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34). Otherwise the figural style and

³¹⁸ Gierson, ed. *Gates of Mystery*, 190; Likhacheva, “Kentemata,” 245.

³¹⁹ Svirin, *Drevnerusskoe shit’e*, 29–40.

the handling of color on the Tikhvin embroidery make the association with the Novgorod group unmistakable. The embroidered chiaroscuro in the blue draperies around Christ, on the legs of the Virgin, and on the arms of John the Theologian is particularly important for linking the Tikhvin embroidery with those of Puchezhsk and Khutinsk. The detail of the peacock-like feathers in the wings of the angels reinforces this association (compare figure 62 to figures 54 and 55). The figure of Christ is also elongated in a manner similar to the figures of Christ on the Puchezhsk and Khutinsk embroideries. The attenuation is less pronounced, but that coincides with a less pronounced elongation of the composition as a whole. The ratio of width to height creates a shorter rectangle in the case of the Tikhvin Aër-Epithafios, and judging by what remains of the original state it must have been considerably smaller than the other aër-epithafioi of the Novgorod group.

Only one evangelist symbol survives, that of the eagle representing John, but the others certainly must have filled the remaining corners. Other features that have probably been lost are the sun and the moon, the six-winged seraphim atop the rhipidia, and the candle between the kneeling angels. What does survive allows us to date this work to approximately the same period as the aër-epithafioi from Puchezhsk and Khutinsk, the middle of the fifteenth century.

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- Mann, C. Griffith, ed. *Sacred Arts and City Life: The Glory of Medieval Novgorod*. Baltimore: Palace Editions, 2005, catalogue number 178, pp. 180–81.
- Likhacheva, Liudmila D. “Kentemata.” In *Oi Pyle tou Misteriou*, edited by Manoles Borboudakes, 119–47. Athens: Choregos, 1994, figure 49, p. 123, and p. 245.
- Pirovano, Carlo. *Arte e sacro mistero: tesori dal Museo russo di San Pietroburgo*. Milan: Electa, 2000, p. 194, catalogue number 59, photographs on pp. 194 (full) and 195 (detail).

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- Smirnova, Engelina Sergeevna, V. K. Laurina, and E. A. Gordienko. *Zhivopis' Vlikogo Novgoroda, XV vek*. Moscow: Nauka, 1982.

38. (Figure 63)

Aër-Epitaphios at the Patmos Monastery (Patmos 1).

125 x 80 cm.

Ca. 1460.

The Monastery of Saint John the Theologian and Evangelist, Patmos, Greece.

Given what this embroidery might be able to tell us about aër-epitaphioi in mid-fifteenth-century Asia Minor, it has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. It has an inscription that tells us the name of the Patron and the church to which it was given. It also has some unusual features in common with another embroidery at Patmos (Patmos 2—catalogue number 39, figure 64), but the two seem to be the work of different embroiderers. Their presence at the same monastery now might be a coincidence. Since they are located at the same monastery, it is possible that one could have been the model for the other. If that is the case, however, the second embroiderer made several adaptations. It is more likely that they both represent individual examples of one regional tradition. Which region they represent is a question that might be answered only with close study of the embroidery technique itself.

The iconography is similar to the iconography on the aër-epitaphios in the Victoria and Albert Museum (catalogue number 21, figure 41). On Patmos 1, Christ lies on a slab. Two full-length deacon-angels stand at either end of the central panel. They hold rhipidia that bear images of six-winged seraphim. The sun and the moon are embroidered above the angels. The angels are also identified with inscriptions above their heads: APX MHXAHΛ on the left, APX ΓABPIHΛ on the right. Above Christ is the cross. On the left side of the cross is the spear. The reed and sponge are on the right. The inscriptions ΙΣ ΧΣ and Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ appear just above Christ's head and body.

In the border is a leaf-and-vine pattern on red silk. The silk around the border is less faded than the background of the center panel. The background in the center is also more worn, suggesting that the border is a later addition. In each corner is a bust of a saint, but they are Church Fathers rather than evangelists: Gregory in the upper left, Chrysostom in the lower left, Basil in the upper right, and Nicholas in the lower right. Three of them, Gregory, Basil and Chrysostom, were authors of the liturgy, as Theocharis recognized.³²⁰ The dedicatory inscription just below the tomb or slab explains the presence of Nicholas among this group of figures.

+Ἀφιερώθη ὁ παρὼν ἄμνος εἰς τὸν μέγαν νικόλαον τῆς μεγίστης / παρὰ τοῦ πανιεροτάτου μ(ητ)ροπολίτου μιρέων ὑπερτίμου κ(αὶ) ἐξάρχου πάσις λυκίας κὲ προέδρου καρπάθου / κὲ ναξίας ματθέου.³²¹

(This amnos was dedicated to the Great Nikolaos on the island of Megiste by the most reverend Metropolitan of Myra, most honorable, exarch of the whole Lycia, and president of Karpathos and Naxia, Matthew.)³²²

The church to which the original donation was made, on the island of Megiste, was dedicated to Nicholas. Matthew was abbot at Patmos ca. 1454–1460, a period when refugees from Asia Minor came to the island of Patmos.³²³ The inscription seems to confirm an act of donation recorded in a manuscript at Patmos.³²⁴ Theocharis gives this translation of that act of donation: “I humbly, of my own wish and desire and free will, donate to the holy, reverend and sacred monastery...the *amnos* of gold, with wire, and an

³²⁰ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192.

³²¹ Jacopi and Theocharis differ slightly in their transcriptions. My transcription takes into account what both Jacopi and Theocharis report, but I have compared their transcriptions to the photograph published with Theocharis’ essay. Giulio Jacopi, “Cimeli del Ricamo, della pittura e della toreutica nel tesoro del monastero di Patmo,” in *Clara Rhodos* (Bergamo: Istituto Storico-Archeologico di Rodi, 1932–33), 712; Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192.

³²² Jacopi, “Clara Rhodos,” 712; Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192.

³²³ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192.

³²⁴ Patmos Codex 75, cited in Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 191.

aër of gold, also with wire on a red ground.”³²⁵ The text also records the year of the donation, 1460. I have not been able to see the text myself, so the terms used are difficult to interpret. If Theocharis has reported all the Greek words that remain in her translation as transliterations, then the text does seem to refer to the extant aër-epitaphios.³²⁶

Patmos 1 is almost certainly the “amnos” referred to in the record of the donation, and it was considered a distinct type of object from an aër. The Iconography and the word amnos (used in both the inscription and the record of the donation) suggest that the object was meant for use as an aër rather than as an epitaphios, as I have defined those terms in Chapter 1 of Part I. The distinction between an amnos (a term also embroidered on Patmos 1, but only as the title of the iconography) and an aër, in the case of Patmos 1, might be explained by the iconography. The image on the embroidered textile mentioned in the act of donation is the figure of Christ as Amnos. Then what is the aër mentioned in the same document? It is possible that the terminology simply reflects local usage, or current usage, among Greek-speaking peoples in the fifteenth century. Perhaps the term “aër” in this case refers to another type of veil, or perhaps it is simply an alternate word for the same kind of object.

Maria Theocharis concludes from the style and some aspects of the iconography that this object was made in a Western workshop, or at least under the influence of “Western models.”³²⁷ The decorative motifs on the tomb and around the border, as well as the presence of the cross, spear, and reed and sponge are aspects of the iconography that might suggest Western influence. Theocharis also points to the clothes of the angels

³²⁵ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 191.

³²⁶ It is possible, on the other hand, that Theocharis has translated the word “kalymma” as “aër.”

³²⁷ Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192.

and the pose of Christ as evidence of Western models. Aspects of this embroidery could also be compared to Russian models (the inclusion of the cross is similar to the inclusion of the cross on an epitaphios of the Novgorod School—catalogue number 46, figure 77), or Romanian models (the star motif in the background can be traced to the Ephemera Aër-Epitaphios—catalogue number 17, figure 36), or even other Greek models (the full-length deacon-angels are quite similar to those on the aër-epitaphios in the Victoria and Albert Museum—catalogue number 21, figure 41). The question of whether the style reveals Western influence must remain moot. Nothing about this embroidery, however, either contradicts or bears out the claim by Theocharis that Patmos 2 “probably does not come from a workshop in Asia Minor.”³²⁸ Only a careful comparison of the embroidery technique to a known example from Asia Minor in the same period could confirm this, and there is not an example known to have come from Asia Minor.

References:

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- Pallas, Demetrios I. “Der Epitaphios.” In *RBK*, Volume 5, 789–806. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1995, 791.
- Theocharis, Maria. “Church Gold Embroideries.” In *Treasures of Patmos*, edited by Athanasios D. Kominis, 185–217. Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1988, figure 3.

³²⁸ Ibid.

39. (Figure 64)

Aër-Epitaphios at the Patmos Monastery (Patmos 2).

125 x 80 cm.

Second half of the 15th century.

The Monastery of Saint John the Theologian and Evangelist, Patmos, Greece.

There are two aër-epitaphioi in the treasury of the Patmos Monastery that may belong to the fifteenth century. Patmos 1 (catalogue number 38, figure 63) is dated 1460 because the donation is mentioned in a manuscript. The other (which I call “Patmos 2” for convenience, following the example of Demetrios Pallas) has been assigned to the fifteenth century by Maria Theocharis, presumably on iconographic grounds.³²⁹ Patmos 2 looks very much like Patmos 1 in its iconography, but not in its style. Surprisingly little has been written about this embroidery. While Theocharis is probably correct in assigning Patmos 2 to the fifteenth century, Demetrios Pallas assigned both Patmos 2 and Patmos 1 to the second half of the sixteenth century.³³⁰ Patmos 2 merits further close study. It is in poor condition. Large areas of gold, silver, and silk thread are missing. Some of the blue backing silk of the central panel is missing. Some of the red silk around the border has also worn away. The iconography is still clear, and most of the inscriptions are still legible.

Patmos 2 is a small aër-epitaphios, but the same size as Patmos 1. The iconography is simple, with the figure of Christ accompanied by two deacon-angels. It does not have narrative elements of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography. The figure of Christ is shown lying in the center of the composition. The body floats above the sepulcher. The tomb itself is unusually thick so that it looks like a tomb or a sarcophagus

³²⁹ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 793; Theocharis, “Church Gold Embroideries,” 192 and 202, figure 2.

³³⁰ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 793.

rather than a shroud or a slab. Two angels stand on either side. They are shown as full-length figures as in Patmos 1 (catalogue number 38, figure 63) and the aër-epitaphios at the Victoria and Albert Museum (catalogue number 21, figure 41). The angels hold rhipidia decorated with six-winged seraphim. Behind the figure of Christ is the cross. The cross includes an inscribed titulus. The inscription on the titulus is damaged, but a few of the letters are clearly visible: ΟΒΣΛΤΔΞ (The King of Glory?). The most interesting aspect of the titulus is that the inscription is in blue against the couched gold titulus. Other than the inscription on the titulus, inscriptions are in gold wire. It is as though the inscription on the titulus has been done in reverse, the letters formed by leaving the shape of the letters unembroidered, with the backing cloth showing through where gold has not been couched onto the surface. This might in fact be the case, but I have seen only photographs of this embroidery, and published descriptions are silent on the topic of the titulus. Below the titulus, the crown of thorns encircles the point at which the arms of the cross meet. To the left of the cross is the spear. To the right of the cross is the reed and sponge, though that part of the embroidery is badly worn.

As they are on Patmos 1 the deacon-angels on Patmos 2 are identified with the archangels Michael and Gabriel. The inscription Αρχ Μηχαήλ (Archangel Michael) appears above the head of the angel on the left. The inscription Αρχ Γαβριήλ[λ] (Archangel Gabriel) appears above the head of the angel on the right. Below the arms of the cross are the initials ΦΧ, the Φ on the left side and the Χ on the right side. Below that is ΦΠ, with the Φ on the left side and the Π on the right side of the cross. This is the

abbreviation of Φ(ῶς) Χ(ριστοῦ) Φ(αίνει) Π(ᾶσιν)³³¹ (The light of Christ shines for all).

Above the head of Christ is the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ. Above Christ's legs is the inscription Ἡ Ἀπόκαθήςλωσις (The Deposition). This is an unusual choice of title to find embroidered on an aër-epitaphios. "Entombment" or "Epitaphios Threnos" are more usual. Nevertheless the event in the narrative and its commemoration in the liturgy of Holy Week would be understandably associated with the use of an aër or an epitaphios. It seems unlikely that the title would indicate that the object was meant only for use on Good Friday.

In each corner of the border is a six-winged seraph, and each holds a pair of rhipidia. The border, in gold wire and silk thread against a red silk background is decorated with a vine and leaf pattern. The same, or very similar pattern decorates the sides of the tomb. Also in the borders, near the upper corners and spilling into the central panel, are stains that are most likely candle wax. Close analysis would be helpful in confirming this, but wax drippings appear in similar places on many aër-epitaphioi. Candles would be placed on them while they were displayed on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, as is the practice to this day.

Because of its similarity to Patmos 1, I agree with Maria Theocharis that this embroidery dates to the fifteenth century. Although the styles of the two textiles are different, the iconography is very similar. The decorative motifs and the inscriptions on Patmos 2 tend to be fussier than those on Patmos 1. The figures are also squatter. The embroidery technique, especially in the inscriptions where the letters are couched as

³³¹ M. Avi-Yonha, "Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions (the near East, 200 B.C.–A.D. 1100)," in *Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions: Papyri Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, ed. Nicolas Oikonomides (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1974), 110.

braids of gold thread, is similar to a sixteenth-century epitaphios in the Benaki Museum (Benaki Museum 34680—see figure 126). Little else can be identified other than the instruments of the Passion behind the figure of Christ in both textiles that links Patmos 2 to the example at the Benaki Museum. The iconography is our best clue for dating Patmos 2. Such an embroidered aër or epitaphios, with only the figures of Christ Amnos and the deacon-angels, would have been unusual, though not unheard of, after the fifteenth century. Patmos 1 remains our best clue to dating Patmos 2, but such weak evidence means that all we can really do is guess that Patmos 2 probably dates to the second half of the fifteenth century.

References:

- Jacopi, Giulio. “Cimeli del Ricamo, della pittura e della toreutica nel tesoro del monastero di Patmo.” In *Clara Rhodos*, 709–16: Istituto Storico-Archeologico di Rodi, 1932–33, page 712, figure 87. The catalogue entry lists this item as being illustrated at figure 87, but the copies I have seen jump from figure 86 to figure 88 on the verso of the same leaf, omitting figure 87.
- Pallas, Demetrios I. “Der Epitaphios.” In *RBK*, Volume 5, 789–806. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1995, 793.
- Theocharis, Maria. “Church Gold Embroideries.” In *Treasures of Patmos*, edited by Athanasios D. Kominis, 185–217. Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1988, figure 2.

40. (Not illustrated)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Putna Monastery.

83 x 62 cm.

1480/1.

Putna Monastery, Romania (Inventory number 99—Tafrali's Putna 85).³³²

The treasury of Putna Monastery in Bucovina contains one of the most important collections of medieval liturgical embroidery. The objects have been well studied over the years, or have at least received a good deal of scholarly attention. One object, however, seems to have slipped through the cracks of recent scholarship because of a printing error. In his important survey of the Putna treasury, Oreste Tafrali recorded a number of aëres and epitaphioi. On pages 49–50 he described a set to which he assigned the numbers 83–85. What he described seems to have been a set of two kalymmata and an aër, but he used the term *Antémision* (antimension) for the third piece of the set. It is worth repeating Tafrali's complete entry for the object he listed as Putna 85:

III. *Antémision* (Épitaphios threnos), mêmes soie couleur. 0^m83 x 0^m62.

Le Christ est étendu sur son lit, entouré de la Vierge, de saint Jean et de quatre anges. Les plis des vêtements brodés fil d'or, ainsi que les nimbes, sont marques de perles fines. Les figures des saints son brunes, leurs vêtements dorés, rouges, verts ou bleus.

Sur la bordure, on relève l'inscription slavonne:

ДАДЕ СТЕФАНЪ ВОЕВОДА ВЪ ЛѢТО СЦПӨ МАР К.

*Donné par Étienne Voïvode en l'an 6989 (=1481), le 20 mars.*³³³

In a footnote to the inscription Tafrali referred to Inventory number 99 (the monastery's inventory number) and Dimitrie Dan's 1905 publication of this embroidery. Dan's transcription is actually slightly different: ДАДЕ СТЕФАНЪ ВОЕВОДА ВЪ ЛѢТО СЦПӨ МАРТ

³³² Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 50, and note 4.

³³³ Ibid., 50.

̄. ³³⁴ The sense is the same, however: “Given by Stephan Voivode in the year 1481, March 20.” The differences in the transcriptions are negligible in this case (the thousands sign, the “т” at the end of “март,” and the abbreviation symbol over the day), and they mean only that the two scholars observed the same object, that they read the sense of it the same way, but they recorded slightly different details. Such details can become important, however, especially in the interpretation of dates, as was the case for the Aër-Epitaphios of Basil II (catalogue number 34, figure 58) and the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66) among other examples in which the interpretation of the lettering has caused scholars to read very different dates for objects on which the date is actually embroidered. In the case of Putna 85 Ștefan cel Mare is identified as the patron, and the date is specified clearly and seems to have been in good enough condition to leave no doubt about the date March 20, 1481. Émile Turdeanu also recorded this embroidery but mentioned only the dimensions and the inscription. ³³⁵ Turdeanu’s transcription is identical to Dimitrie Dan’s. It is possible that Turdeanu was only repeating information from Dan and Tafrali, whose works he cited as references, and perhaps without having seen this embroidery himself. There is no reason to doubt either Dan’s or Tafrali’s reports of the inscription or their descriptions of the embroidery in question.

It was a relatively small embroidery, if it was intended as an epitaphios, of 83 x 62 cm, but this size would have been appropriate for an aër. It had a background cloth of purple silk, silk of the same color as the two small kalymmata listed by Tafrali as Putna

³³⁴ Dimitrie Dan, *Mănăstirea și comuna Putna cu două apendice*, Edițiunea Academiei Române (Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1905), 65.

³³⁵ Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 205.

83 and Putna 84 (figures 173–174).³³⁶ It was embroidered with the Epitaphios Threnos: Christ on a “bed” (presumably the stone slab), the Virgin and John, and four angels. The embroidery itself included gold, silk thread of reds, greens, and blues, and small pearls around contour lines of clothes and halos. Tafrali’s description of the iconography calls to mind the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30). It is different from the textile described by Tafrali on pages 35–36 where he discusses Putna 65.³³⁷ It seems that the object described as Putna 85 was supposed to be illustrated in Tafrali’s book at Plate 42, number 1. The caption there reads, “No. 85—Tissu liturgiques, «Antemission», à l’Épitaphios threnos de l’an 1481.”³³⁸ This caption clearly refers to Tafrali’s Putna 85 described on page 50, and it follows two images on plate 41 identified as N° 83 and N° 84, which match the descriptions on pages 49 and 50 of the two kalymmata that Tafrali describes as part of a set with the “*antémision*,” which he lists as 85. The image actually reproduced on plate 42 matches the description of Putna 65 given on pages 35–36. Gabriel Millet and others seem not to have noticed the error. Millet even described Putna 65 while referring to it as Putna 85.³³⁹ The exception is Émile Turdeanu who referred to Tafrali’s Putna 65 as Putna I and Tafrali’s Putna 85 as Putna II, and Turdeanu also cited the correct page numbers for the descriptions without making reference to the photograph.³⁴⁰ A photograph of Putna 85 has yet to be published, and I did not see this textile when I visited Putna in July 2005. At the museum in the monastery, Putna 65 (Tafrali’s number) is now presented among a group of three (identified on the museum

³³⁶ Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 50.

³³⁷ Ibid., 35–36.

³³⁸ Ibid., Atlas, plate 42, 1.

³³⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 106.

³⁴⁰ Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 205.

labels as 62, 63, and 64) that also includes Tafrali's 83 and 84. In other words, even the monastery museum itself continues to follow the mistake made in Tafrali's 1925 publication.

Although Tafrali identified it as an antimimension, this object was probably meant to be used as an aër. Except for the iconography, there is no reason to believe this textile was an antimimension. Specifically it might have been the aër of a set that also included the two kalymmata identified by Tafrali as Putna 83 and 84 (figures 173–174). The iconography described by Dan and Tafrali was a version of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography that included the Virgin and John, but that would become a standard iconography on epitaphioi and then on aëres, part of the “retro-influence” described by Robert Taft.³⁴¹ It is also possible, however, that Tafrali's Putna 65 was in fact also intended for use as an aër and was the original third textile of the set, which is how it is now displayed in the museum at Putna. The reasons to think so are discussed in the essay for catalogue number 41. The main reason to doubt that possibility is the border inscription on Putna 65, a version of the Good Friday troparion “Noble Joseph.” For the same reasons that the Epitaphios Threnos iconography was by the time of Ștefan cel Mare appropriate for an aër, so the hymn “Noble Joseph” would also have been appropriate. It is possible that both objects, Putna 85 and Putna 65, could have been used either as aëres during the Great Entrance or as epitaphioi during Holy Week, or perhaps they were used as both. Both could also have been the aëres (draped on the backs of the deacons) during the Great Entrance, while the two small textiles (Tafrali 83 and 84) were

³⁴¹ Robert Taft discusses how the development of the Holy Week liturgy resulted in adaptations of the Great Entrance. Taft, *The Great Entrance*, 247–49. This seems to be reflected in the use of Epitaphios Threnos iconography on the aër.

used as kalymmata and another textile was used as the aër, an arrangement illustrated in certain fresco paintings of the Divine Liturgy (also discussed in Part I, Chapter 2) such as the 1560 wall paintings at the Church of Saint Nicholas at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos (figures 109 and 110).³⁴²

Made at the same time, for the same patron, and with the same kinds of materials, it is not surprising that the two objects would be mistaken for each other, but Putna 65, illustrated in Tafrali's catalogue as 85, has three Marys and no John. Putna 85, of which no photograph has been published, had one Mary (the Virgin) and John. If the treasury at the Putna Monastery still contains the aër described by Dan and Tafrali, it was not on display in the monastery museum in July 2005. Because Ștefan cel Mare was the patron, and because the iconography is similar but the intended functions seems to have been different, the two objects (Putna 65 and Putna 85) should be studied closely and published again.

References:

Dan, Dimitrie. *Mănăstirea și comuna Putna cu două apendice*, Edițiunea Academiei Române. Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1905, p. 65.

Tafrali, Oreste. *Le trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925, p. 50, not illustrated. A photograph of Putna 65 (catalogue number 41) was substituted for a photograph of Putna 85 on plate 42.

Turdeanu, Emil. "La broderie religieuse en Roumanie: les épitaphes moldaves aux XVe et XVIe siècles." *Cercetări Literare* 4 (1940), pp. 183, 205, number 4.

The following works also refer to "Putna 85," but they actually discuss Putna 65:

Millet, Gabriel. *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*. Paris: Ernest Leroux 1939, Presses Universitaires de France, 1947, in reference to Putna 66, not illustrated but described on page 108. Millet is clearly referring to the photograph rather than to Tafrali's description on p. 50, although Millet cites both the photograph on Tafrali's plate 42, 1 and the description at Tafrali p. 50.

³⁴² Millet, *Monuments de l'Athos*, 61 and figures 256.2 and 57.2.

Ștefănescu, I. D. “Le voile de calice brodée du monastère de Vatra-Moldoviței.” In *L’art byzantin chez les Slaves: Les Balkans*, 303–309. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1930, p. 306. This work simply refers to the photograph in Tafrali’s survey identified as number 85, but this photograph is in fact number 65, as discussed above.

41. (Figure 65)
Putna Aër (Tafrali 65).³⁴³
85 x 58 cm.
1481.
Putna Monastery, Romania (Tafrali 65).

As discussed above (catalogue number 42) Putna 65 has been mistaken for Putna 85 since a publication by Oreste Tafrali in 1925.³⁴⁴ The confusion results not from Tafrali's description on pages 35–36, but because of a misprint that shows Putna 65 on plate 42, 1 where it is clearly identified as Putna 85, which is described on page 50. The object illustrated is in fact Putna 65, which was described by Tafrali as it had been by Dimitrie Dan in 1905.³⁴⁵ Confusingly, Dimitrie Dan reports that the monastery's inventory number for both of these objects was number 99.³⁴⁶ Tafrali repeated this number.³⁴⁷ He also assigned them his own numbers, 65 and 85, which have been followed by some scholars since Tafrali's publication.³⁴⁸ To make matters worse, N. P. Kondakov also described the object that Tafrali calls Putna 65, but Kondakov referred to it as belonging to the Sucevița Monastery.³⁴⁹ Émile Turdeanu also discussed this embroidery, but referred to it as Putna I.³⁵⁰ Regardless of all the confusion, the object illustrated at plate 42 is the object described by Tafrali on pages 35–36. Referred to by

³⁴³ I saw this textile at the Putna Monastery Museum in July 2005.

³⁴⁴ Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 35–36 and 50. A photograph of Putna 65 (catalogue number 41) was substituted for a photograph of Putna 85 on plate 42.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 35–36; Dan, *Mănăstirea și comuna Putna cu două apendice*, 67.

³⁴⁶ Dan, *Mănăstirea și comuna Putna cu două apendice*, 65 and 67.

³⁴⁷ Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 35, note 3, and 50, note 4.

³⁴⁸ Gabriel Millet and I.D. Ștefănescu both used the number 85 to refer to Tafrali's 65. Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 105–06; I. D. Ștefănescu, "Le Voile de calice brodée du monastère de Vatra-Moldoviței," in *L'Art byzantin chez les Slaves: Les Balkans* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1930), 306, note 3.

³⁴⁹ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*, 267.

³⁵⁰ Turdeanu, "Les Épitaphes moldaves," 205.

Tafrali as an “épitaphios,” Putna 65 may have been intended as an aër.³⁵¹ The monastery museum refers to it as an aër, but it has been displayed with two kalymmata as though it is part of the set listed by Tafrali as 83, 84, and 85, which may be a mistake caused by the printing error in Tafrali’s book.³⁵²

Tafrali might have been correct, however, in calling it an epitaphios. Even though it is small, 85 x 58 cm., the iconography shows the figure of Christ on a slab, the seated Virgin embracing his head. Christ is identified with the abbreviations ΙΣ ΧΣ. The Virgin is identified as MY (sic) ΘΥ. At Christ’s feet are two women, and both are identified with the initial M. So this embroidery includes Christ and three Marys rather than Christ, the Virgin and John. Above the figure of Christ are two angels of the deacon type but identified here as ΑΡΧΑ ΜΗΧΑΗΛ (Archangel Michael) and ΑΡΧΑ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ (Archangel Gabriel). They hold rhipidia, but the rhipidia are topped with seraphim as opposed to seraphim within circles. In the upper left and upper right corners are the sun and the moon. Below Christ are two kneeling angels, ΑΡΧ ΡΑΦ (Archangel Raphael) and ΑΡΧ ΗΡΟΥΗΛ (Archangel Irouël).

The border inscription is in two parts. Along the bottom is the dedication.

+ΙΣΘ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΉ ΒΟΕΒΟΔΑ Β̅ΖΙΕΖ ΜΛ̅ΤΙΖ ΓΠ̅ΔΡΉ ΖΕΜΛΗ ΜΟΛΔΑΒΣΚΟΗ ΣΥΤΒΟΡΗ ΣΥΗ
ΒΛ̅ΤΟ ϣΥΠΘ ΜΡΤ Κ.

³⁵¹ Tafrali described it as an “Épitaphios brodée de fil d’or et d’argent sur soie couleur marron, longueur 0m85, larg. 0m58.” Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 35.

³⁵² See the Putna Monastery Web site <http://www.putna.ro/arta/aer-1481-eng.htm>. In July 2005 the display at the Putna Monastery museum included Tafrali’s Putna 65 with Putna 83 and Putna 84 illustrated by Tafrali on plate 41. The numbers assigned by the museum are different now, but they have clearly followed the illustrations in Tafrali’s book to group these three together rather than following the descriptions. It is possible that the object described by Dimitrie Dan (page 65) and Oreste Tafrali (page 50) has been lost.

(John Stephan Voivode, by the Grace of God, Lord of the land of Moldavia had this made in the year 6989, March 20.)

This dedication is slightly longer than the dedication on Putna 85, but both inscriptions give the same day, month and year.

It is possible, then, that these two embroideries and the two kalymmata (Tafrali's Putna 83 and 84—see figures 173 and 174) were a complete set of two kalymmata, an aër, and an epitaphios. The small size of Putna 65, which is actually smaller in area than Putna 85, casts some doubt on this hypothesis. It is possible that they were both aëres and that neither was intended for use as an epitaphios. Other epitaphioi for which Ștefan cel Mare was the patron were made on a much grander scale. An epitaphios at Putna dated to 1490/1 (catalogue number 44) is about 8.5 times larger than Putna 65.³⁵³ The iconography and inscriptions also cast doubt on the possibility that either Putna 65 or Putna 85 was meant for use as an epitaphios, although nothing about either textile would make using them as epitaphioi inexplicable. Putna 65 shows only three Marys and four angels. Putna 85 shows John the Theologian. Oreste Tafrali and Dimitrie Dan recorded no hymn on Putna 85, but the hymn on Putna 65 would have been appropriate for either an epitaphios or an aër.

The hymn “Noble Joseph” runs around the border of Putna 65, from the bottom right, around the top, and down to the bottom left.

+БЛАГОУБРАЗНЫ ІОСНФЪ СЪ ДРѢВА СЪ/НЕМ ПРѢСТОЕ ТѢЛО ТѢ ПЛАЩАННУЕА
УНСТОА СЪВНВЪ Н ВОПѢМ Н ВЪ / ГРОБѢ НОВѢ ЗАКРЫВЪ ПОЛОЖИ.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ In area.

³⁵⁴ As Turdeanu noted, Tafrali omitted the word сънем from his transcription. Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 35; Turdeanu, “Les Épitaphes moldaves,” 205.

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices, taking upon himself its burial, laid it in a new grave).

While the hymn suggests that this textile could have been used during Holy Week, the absence of John the Theologian makes the iconography unusual for an epitaphios of this period. Regardless of the intended functions of Putna 65 and Putna 85, the two objects might have been cut literally from the same cloth. The purple silk background, which now appears brownish-red, associates Putna 65 very clearly with the two kalymmata (Tafrali's 83 and 84). Undoubtedly the four pieces composed a set, and at least one of the two larger cloths (Putna 65 or 85) was meant for use as an aër during the Great Entrance.

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42. (Figure 66)
Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței.³⁵⁵
70 x 62 cm.
May 15, 1484.
Moldovița Monastery, Vatra-Moldoviței, Romania.

The Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței has received so much scholarly attention that the object's bibliography is unusually large. This textile is, however, a finely worked piece of unusual artistic quality. It is also Moldavian, so it is fortunate that Romanian scholars have been particularly adept at cataloguing and interpreting all medieval artifacts relevant to Romanian history. The Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței also belongs to the period of Ștefan cel Mare (1457–1504), which makes it an example of one of the most important periods in the history of embroidery, although Ștefan cel Mare himself was not the patron in this case.

The iconography, if the date 1484 is correct, is unexpected for this period. Pauline Johnstone aptly described it as “strongly archaistic.”³⁵⁶ Gabriel Millet listed this embroidery in his group 1a, with the aër-epitaphioi of the Pantokrator Monastery (catalogue number 8, figure 21) and the Velika Remeta Monastery, Fruška Gora, Serbia (catalogue number 2, figure 5). The figure of Christ is shown in three-quarter profile, but without a shroud or stone to lie on, as though the embroidered cloth itself is meant to be understood as the shroud. On one side of Christ, his left, are three mourning angels, two six-winged seraphim, and four gold-embroidered squares with the inscription CTB

³⁵⁵ I saw this textile at the Moldovița Monastery Museum in July 2005. Although this aër-epitaphios and another epitaphios listed in this catalogue (number 45) are both in the treasury of the Moldovița Monastery, I will follow Gabriel Millet and others in referring to number 42 as the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios. Vatra-Moldoviței is the name of the commune in Suceava County where the monastery is located. The distinction in naming these two examples is meant, in my case, only to avoid confusion.

³⁵⁶ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 123.

[C(βε)Tb=Holy] in each one flank the seraphim. On the other side of Christ, his right, are two more seraphim and a throne (a pair of linked, four-winged rings with many eyes), and four more squares with the inscription CTb.

In the space around the figures and inscriptions is a repeated pattern of flower-like stars with dots between the “petals.” The orientation is ambiguous. The pose of Christ suggests that the border to Christ’s right is meant to be seen as the bottom of the composition, with Christ’s head pointing to the viewer’s left. Some of the inscriptions, however, such as the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ (on either side of Christ’s head), the letters Ο ΩΝ (The One Who Exists) in the arms of the cross in Christ’s halo, and the four instances of the inscription CTb to Christ’s left, are oriented as though the side near Christ’s feet is the bottom of the composition. The closest parallel to this iconography would be the Pantokrator Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 8, figure 21). The style is quite different, however, and is reminiscent of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36), especially in the execution of the star motif and the mourning angels. The faces of the seraphim are handled in different ways, with one including a full face and halo—as though the face is in front of the wings—while the others have faces peeking through the wings. Curiously, the inscription CTb near the seraph with the halo is embroidered in gold thread, while the others are in silver. Perhaps this is evidence that there was more than one embroiderer for this work.

The original background must have been damaged. All the space around the figures, stars, and inscriptions has been filled in with red silk thread embroidery. This is also the case with the Neamt̃ Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figures 50 through 52). It is possible that one embroiderer or workshop was responsible for the repair of the

backgrounds for both textiles, but it is unknown when and where the repairs were made. The size of this textile may complicate the attempt to categorize it as either an aër or an epitaphios. Its size is quite small, especially compared to other Moldavian epitaphioi of the late fifteenth century. An example in the same monastery, the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 45, figure 71) measures 205 x 115 cm, nearly three times as wide as the Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței. The size, however, might have more to do with the resources of the patron than with the intended function of the object. We expect a kalymma to be relatively small compared to an aër or especially an epitaphios, but this object is about the size of a kalymma and yet it is embroidered with iconography appropriate for an aër and a hymn appropriate for an epitaphios. It does also have traces of wax around the border and near the head of Christ. This could be taken as evidence that this textile has been displayed as an epitaphios for Holy Saturday when candles and other objects would have been placed on it. It is possible to imagine other theories that explain the wax drippings, but larger epitaphioi often have wax drippings around the border as this one does.

The inscription around the border includes the troparion “Noble Joseph,” which was associated by this time with both Holy Saturday and the Great Entrance, and a dedication. The version of the hymn embroidered here is slightly longer than the version embroidered on the aër-epitaphios in the Victoria and Albert Museum (catalogue number 21, figure 41).

БЛАГОСЪБРАЗНЪИ ИЗОСНФЪ СЪ ДРЪВА СЕМЪ ПР(Ъ)У(НС)ТОЕ
 ТЪЛО / ТВОЕ · ПЛАТОНИЦЕЖ У(Н)СТОЖ СЪБВНВЪ И ВОИЪМН ВО
 ГРОБЪ НОВЪ ЗАКРЪИВЪ ПОЛОЖИТЕ СЪ / НА ТРИ Д(Ъ)НЕ ВЕНЪ
 ВЪСКР(Ъ)СЕ Г(ОСПОД)И ПОДАА МНРОВИ ВЕЛІА М(Н)Λ(ОС)ТЪ О

(pдc)ΠΛΑΤΙΕ³⁵⁷ / СЪН ΔΕΡЬ СЪТВОРН СД ПРН НГОУМЕНЪ ПОПЪ
ΔΝΑСТΑCІН В ΛΕΤΟ ϣCІ, CB M(Δ)Ъ IE.³⁵⁸

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices, taking upon himself its burial, laid it in a new grave, but after three days you were resurrected, O lord, and gave the world this great mercy, O crucifixion. This aër was made by the Hegoumenos Father Anastasios in the year 6992 May 15.)

Although the inscription is in Slavonic, the term “aep” (a loanword from Greek) is used in this and other Moldavian embroideries rather than the word “boзayx” as in Russian embroideries.

The year 6992 is 1484. The dating has been controversial but Gabriel Millet proposed the solution that I have adopted here.³⁵⁹ I. D. Ștefănescu had at first read the date 1392.³⁶⁰ This makes sense if we read only the first part, ϣCІ, as 6900 (or 1391/2), but the rest is left as a puzzle. Ștefănescu changed his mind and accepted the interpretation of “un savant russe” whom he was unable to name.³⁶¹ The symbol after the first part of the date had been taken as another thousands sign, and thus as an indication of a separate set of numerals, but the symbol ϣC is actually an alternative way of writing the koppa (C), which was used as the numeral 90. The number 90 is more commonly indicated by the Cyrillic letter Ч in Slavonic inscriptions. The *koppa* written as ϣC also appears in other Moldavian embroideries, such as the 1489/90 epitaphios in the Putna

³⁵⁷ This word is difficult to read in the inscription. My transcription follows G. Millet at this point. Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 88.

³⁵⁸ See also Mihai Berza, ed. *Repertoriul Monumentelor și Obiectelor de Artă din Timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Bucharest: Academia Republicii Populare Romîne, 1958).

³⁵⁹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 87.

³⁶⁰ I. D. Ștefănescu, *L'Évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1928), 51.

³⁶¹ Ștefănescu, “Le Voile de calice brodée du monastère de Vatra-Moldoviței,” 309.

monastery (Tafrali 66—catalogue number 41, figure 65).³⁶² This still leaves another numeral (B), which gives us 6992. Gabriel Millet's careful reading provides the best interpretation of the date.

The handling of the composition may be the most remarkable aspect of this work. The iconography may be considered archaic for the late fifteenth century, but it is not so very different from other examples of the period. Only the shroud, the Virgin, John and the mourning women are absent. It is likely that the simplified iconography is merely an imitation of the Ephemera and Eupraxia Aër-Epithaphios (catalogue number 17, figure 36). The figural style is also somewhat awkward. The figure of Christ is stiff. The draperies are angular. Pauline Johnstone referred to the angels as "stiff and ungainly."³⁶³ The embroidery technique, however, is quite fine, and the wings of the angels, if not their bodies, exhibit great variety in their poses. Most interesting of all, and one of the most visually exciting aspects of the composition, is the way the wings of the mourning angels are arrayed so that they overlap the border. Letters within the border inscription were embroidered to accommodate the intrusion of the wings into their space. The visual interest of this part of the composition contrasts with the stiffness of the figure of Christ. This might be a deliberate decision that was made to contrast the abstract body of Christ with the almost expressionistic poses of the mourning angels. It might also be only further evidence that more than one embroiderer, one more skilled or creative than the other, collaborated on this textile.

³⁶² Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 36; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 87.

³⁶³ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 123.

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43. (Figures 67 and 68)

Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan.

181.5 x 110.5 cm.

1485.

Riazan Regional Museum (3495).

The Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan is almost identical to the Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal (catalogue number 25, figure 46). Both are aëres that depict the Communion of the Apostles rather than either the Epitaphios Threnos or the figure of Christ Amnos. Only their size significantly differentiates them from kalymmata. These two textiles, separated in time by most of the fifteenth century, represent a kind of subset of aëres. The Pereiaslavl-Riazan Aër has, however, a few minor differences from the earlier example, and the scenes from the life of Anne are equally appropriate for the patron of this piece, although for different reasons.

The center panel shows the Communion of the Apostles in the usual manner with Christ represented twice, once with the bread and once with the wine. The figures of Christ stand under a baldachin. Six apostles approach on each side, taking bread on the left and wine on the right. Behind the figures on each side is a building shown in isometric perspective. Above the two groups are angels identified in badly worn inscriptions as ΓΑΒΡΗΛ (Gabriel) on the right and ΜΗΧ (Michael) on the left. Above either the two heads of Christ are the abbreviations ΙΣ ΧΣ. Above the apostles on either side is an inscription in Slavonic characters. On the right: ΠΗΙΤΕ Ο ΝΕΑ ΒΧΗ СЕ ЕСТЬ КРОВЬ ΜΟΑ ΝΟΒΑГО ΖΑΒѢТА (Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant). On the left: ΠΡΙΗΜѢТЕ Η ΑΔΗΤΕ СЕ ЕСТЬ ТѢЛО ΜΟΕ ΕЖЕ ΖΑ ΒΥΙ ΛΟΜΗΜΟΕ ΝΑ ΠΡΑΒΟΗ (Take, eat. This is my body). In each of the four

corners of the outer border is an evangelist portrait: OA ΙΩ (Saint John) in the upper left, OΑΓ MATΘEH (Saint Matthew) in the upper right, O ΑΓ MAPKO (Saint Mark) in the lower right, OA ΛδKO (Saint Luke) in the lower left.

An idiosyncratic figural style adds to the visual effect of this embroidery. Shadows are used as elements of design rather than to create naturalistic chiaroscuro even to the limited extent that we might expect to encounter chiaroscuro in embroidered vestments or any figural art of the Byzantine tradition. The dark lines around eyes, for example, spiral into beards or shadows under chins (see figure 68, a detail of figure 67). The gold-embroidered contour lines in draperies are all executed in a wavy pattern that gives the impression that there are no truly straight lines, an approach found even in the architecture behind the figures where the metallic thread is couched in wavy lines (figure 68). The embroiderers have succeeded in creating a stylized, nervous energy in an otherwise standard variation of familiar iconography. As similar as this aër is to the Suzdal Aër, it is not an exact copy. The colors are somewhat less varied and intense. The altars in front of Christ are in isometric perspective, but the diagonal lines of the altar tops point in opposite directions from each other, rather than in the same direction as on the Suzdal Aër. The baldachin is treated as one contiguous architectural element. On the Suzdal Aër there are two separate baldachins. It is especially the jittery handling of the contour lines that distinguishes the Riazan Aër from what we may otherwise presume is its prototype.

Other than the portraits of the gospel writers, the scenes in the border are derived from the life of Joachim, Anne, and Mary from the Protevangelium of James, the apocryphal Gospel of James, just as they are in the border of the Suzdal Aër (catalogue

number 25, figure 46).³⁶⁴ The choice of scenes is almost identical to those in the border of the Suzdal Aër. One exception is that the scene “Caressing the Virgin” is omitted. The “Nativity of the Virgin” is given slightly more space on the Riazan Aër to make up for the absence of the “Caressing” scene. Wording and spelling are slightly different, as we may expect. Otherwise it is only the style of embroidery that differentiates the handling of the narrative cycle in the border of the Riazan Aër from the border of the Suzdal Aër.

There are seventeen scenes labeled with inscriptions around the border of the Riazan Aër. My transcriptions follow those of N. Menchov.³⁶⁵ From left to right across the top: 1. ВЪРАЩЕНІЕ ДАРОВЪ (The rejection of gifts); 2. [ТОГДА ПРИИДЕ В БЕСЪ АЩЕ АЗЪ БЕЗЪУДОБА]³⁶⁶ (Blaming Anne for giving no child); 3. ІОАХИМЪ ГРАДЕТЬ В ПОУСТЫНІЮ (Joachim goes into the wilderness); 4. АННА ПЛАЧЕТСА (Anne Weeps); 5. АНГЕЛЪ ГОСПОДЕНЬ БЛГОВЕСТИ АННѢ (An angel brings good tidings to Anne); 6. ВЪЗВЕЩАЕТЪ АННѢ ІОАХИМОВЪ ПРИХОДЪ (Anne hears of Joachim’s homecoming). From top to bottom on the right: 7. АНГЕЛЪ ГОСПОДЕНЬ БЛГВѢСТИТЪ ІОАХИМѢ (An angel brings good tidings to Joachim); 8. ІОАХИМЪ ГРАДЕТЬ С СТАДЫ (Joachim goes with the herds); 9. БЛАГОВЕЩЕНІЕ (The Annunciation—meaning in this case the Annunciation to the Virgin. This scene on both aëres seems somewhat out of place unless we read it as continuing from the scene with Joseph on the other side of the portrait of Mark). From

³⁶⁴ Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 57–67.

³⁶⁵ N. Menchov, “Vozduch XV veka,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosvieshcheniia* (October 1838): 236–57.

³⁶⁶ Menchov omits this inscription, apparently having been unable to read it. There is an inscription there, however, but I too have been unable to read it in the published photographs. I include a transcription of the corresponding inscription from the Suzdal Aër only for reference.

top to bottom on the left: 10. ЗАЧАТИЕ СВАТЪЙ БОГОРОДНИЦИ (Conception); 11. ПРИН(А)ТЫ ДАРЫ ИОАКИМОВЫ (The gifts of Joachim are accepted); 12. БЛАГОСЛОВЕНИЕ РЕК ИОАКИМА И АННѢ (The priests bless Joachim and Anne). From left to right across the bottom: 13. РОЖЕСТВО ПРЕСВАТЫА БОГОРОДНИЦИ (The Nativity of the Virgin); 14. ПЪСТЪПЛЕНИЕ СВАТЪЙ БОГОРОДНИЦИ (The first steps of the Virgin); 15. ВВЕДѢНІЕ (Presentation); 16. МОЛЕНИЕ О ЖЕЗЛАХЪ (Prayer); 17. ОБРЪЩЕНІЕ ИОСИФА (Betrothal to Joseph). This last inscription is worded slightly differently from that on the Suzdal Aër, but the scene and the title are analogous.

The inscription around the inner border, between the Communion of the Apostles and the outer border with the cycle of Joachim and Anne, is the long dedication. It is in gold thread against a background of the same color as the central panel. My transcription mostly follows those of N. Menchov and N. A. Mayasova. Menchov's expands abbreviations but omits a few words.³⁶⁷ Mayasova's transcription agrees at most points with Menchov's, but it includes the words that Menchov omitted, uses modern spelling, and does not expand abbreviations.³⁶⁸ I have consulted both Mayasova's and Menchov's transcriptions as well as the published photographs to arrive at this transcription. I have not expanded the abbreviations.

В ЛѢТѢ СІЦГ ННДНКТѢ Г СНИ ВЪЗДѢХЪ СОЗДАНЪ БЫ ВЪ ЦРКВѢ
 ѠСПЕНІЕ СТѢН БЦН В ГРАДѢ ПЕРЕАСЛАВЛН РЕЗАНЪСКОМЪ
 ЗАМЪШЛЕНІЕМЪ БЛГОРОДНІА Н БЛГОВЪРНІА Н
 ХРСТОЛЮБНВІА / БЕЛКНІА КНАННН АННІА Н ПРН ЕЕ СІѢ
 БЛАГОРОДНІМЪ Н БЛАГОВЪРНОМЪ Н ХРТОЛЮБНВОМЪ
 БЕЛНКО КНА/ЗН ІОАННѢ ВАСИЛІЕВНЧН РЕЗАНЪСКОМ[Ъ] ІА
 ПРН ЕПНСКОУПѢ СМЕСНѢ РЕЗАНЪСКОМЪ Н МОУРОМЪСКОМЪ

³⁶⁷ Menchov, "Vozduch XV veka," 237–38.

³⁶⁸ Mayasova, *La Broderie russe ancienne*, number 24.

Α ΚΟΝΥΑΝΤΩ ΣΗΗ ΒΖΔΘΧΤ / Β ΛΒΤ ΓΔ ΜΙΔ ΣΕΠΤΑΒΡΙΗ Α ΝΑ
ΠΑΜΑΤΩ ΣΤΟ ΣΠΙΝΟΜΥΝΚΑ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΗ ΒΕΛΗΚΙΗ ΑΡΜΕΝΗΗ

(In the year 6993, indiction 3, this aër was commanded to be made for the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin in the city of Pereiaslavl-Riazan by the noble and pious and Christ-loving Grand Princess Anna and her son the noble and pious and Christ-loving Grand Prince Ivan Vasilievich of Riazan and bishop Semeon of Riazan and Murom; and this aër was completed in the year (69)94 on September 30 in commemoration of Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Great Armenia.)

The date of the command (i.e. the patron's commission) and the date of completion are both given. Because the liturgical year began on 1 September, the two dates may refer to the same calendar year according to our modern calendar. The commission could have been made in either 1484 or 1485, but the date of completion refers to 30 September 1485. This aër is dedicated to Gregory the Illuminator, considered the founder of the Armenian Church, whose feast day was 30 September. The Suzdal Aër had been dedicated to Nikephoros, an iconodule saint and a ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople, whose feast day was the day on which that aër was completed according to its dedication inscription.

Anna was the sister of Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow, and she had been acting as regent for her young son, the Ivan of Riazan mentioned in the inscription.³⁶⁹ As discussed in Chapter 4 of Part I, Anna's position as regent may help to explain the choice of subject for the scenes around the border. Anna sought to expand the territory of Riazan.³⁷⁰ Ogrophiena, the patron of the Suzdal Aër, had used her aër as a prayer to the Virgin to intercede and redress Ogrophiena's childless condition. Anna, however, was interested in securing a future for her son, the Prince of Riazan, or she was at least

³⁶⁹ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 24.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

concerned to expand the territory of Riazan on her son's behalf. The Suzdal Aër was probably the prototype for the Riazan Aër. The subjects of the hagiographic scenes were just as appropriate for Anna as they had been for Ogrophiena. Ogrophiena was interested in a story about childlessness alleviated. Anna was interested in the story of Joachim and Anne because she shared with Saint Anne an acute interest in her child's importance.

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44. (Figures 69 and 70)
Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery.³⁷¹
252 x 166 cm.
1489/90.
Putna Monastery, Romania (Tafrali 66).³⁷²

Gabriel Millet listed the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare with his group 2c, which included only one other embroidery, the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figure 50).³⁷³ The resemblance is remarkable in some of the details, which may suggest either direct or indirect influence of the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios on subsequent Moldavian embroideries. There are significant differences, however, indicating that the embroiderers of the Moldavian tradition did not slavishly copy earlier models. On the other hand certain key works seem to have been of decisive significance for the development of the Moldavian tradition. It is no accident that the most obvious differences between the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios and epitaphioi of the period of Ștefan cel Mare have to do with the introduction of the fully developed narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography onto embroidered epitaphioi. It is also not a coincidence that one of the most impressive groups of Romanian liturgical embroideries was produced during the Moldavian apogee under Ștefan cel Mare. It is a coincidence, however, that the Moldavian apogee and an apparent change in liturgical practice took place during the same period. The late fifteenth century was the period when this change, the transfer of the full Epitaphios Threnos iconography to the embroidered epitaphios, took effect throughout the Orthodox Christian world.

The Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery shows the

³⁷¹ I saw this textile at the Putna Monastery Museum in July 2005.

³⁷² Tafrali, *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, 36 and plate 22.

³⁷³ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102.

figure of Christ on the stone slab. The Virgin embraces Christ's head and shoulders. A woman behind the Virgin, presumably meant to be understood as Mary Magdalene, raises her hands over her head in a gesture of lamentation. At Christ's feet are two bearded figures. One is identified as Joseph, so the other is probably meant to be Nikodemus. John the Theologian holds Christ's left hand near the middle of the composition. Christ's arms are not crossed. Above the narrative Epitaphios Threnos group are four angels: two deacon-angels and two lamenting angels. Four more angels appear in the zone below the slab and are arranged in much the same way as the angels in the upper zone. All the deacon-angels carry rhipidia decorated with six-winged seraphim. Flower-like stars fill the space around the figures. Each corner is filled with one of the evangelist symbols. The colors are striking. Blue and red silk dominate the clothing and the slab. Gold couching is used in the halos, wings, inscriptions, and garments. The background is light blue.

A few inscriptions embroidered in gold identify some of the main Characters in the drama. Above the stone slab are the abbreviation MP ΘY (Meter Theou—Mother of God) and the title O ENTΑΦΗΔCMOC (The Entombment). The use of this title, rather than “Epitaphios Threnos,” is unusual but not unique. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Żółkiew Monastery (catalogue number 26, figure 47) could have been the prototype for the use of this title on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ştefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery. The abbreviation IC XC (Jesus Christ) is embroidered just above Christ's chest within the area of the stone slab. The abbreviation HOC identifies Joseph of Arimathea. None of the other figures in the narrative scene is identified with an inscription. In the corners are the evangelist symbols. They are arranged very much as the symbols in the corner of the

Neamț Aër-Epitaphios were and they are identified with abbreviations: ICΘ (John) is in the upper left; ΛΘΚ (Luke) is in the upper right; ΜΡΚ (Mark) in the lower left; and ΜΑΤΘΣ (Matthew) is in the lower right. The words that introduce the Epinikion Hymn are embroidered within the borders that surround the evangelist symbols. This is further evidence that the Aër-Epitaphios from the Żółkiew Monastery was the prototype for this textile. The word ΔΔΟΝΤΑ (Singing) surrounds the eagle representing John; the word ΒΟΘΝΤΑ (crying) surrounds the ox representing Luke; the word ΚΕΚΡΑΓΟΤΑ (shouting) surrounds the lion representing Mark; and the words ΚΕ ΛΕΓΟΝΤΑ (and saying) surround the winged man representing Matthew. Two types of decorative motif accompany the words in the borders around the evangelist symbols. In the upper left and lower right an acanthus leaf design was used, while interlocking groups of concentric oval appear in the upper right and lower left.

The border inscription begins in left border, in the lower left corner, and proceeds clockwise.

+ΗΖΒΟΛΕΝΙΕΜ ѿЦА Н СЪ ПЄСПЪШЕНИЕМ СНА Н СЪВРЪШЕНИЕМ
 СΤΓΩ ΔΧΑ / ΙΘ ΣΤΕΦΑΝ ΒΟΕΒΟΔΑ ΒΖΙΕЮ ΜΑΤΙЮ ΠΡЪ ΖΕΜΛΗ
 ΜΩΛΔΑΒСКΩΝ СН БОГДАНА ВОЕВОДН Н СЪ БΛΓΟΥЕСТΗΒΟΥ
 ΠΙΖΑΝ ΕΓΟ ΜΑΡΙΗ ∴ / Н СЪ ВЪЗΛЮΒΛΕΝΗΜΗ ΔЪТН ΔΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ
 Н ΒΩΓΔΑΝ ΒΛΑΔΑ СЪТΒЄРН~/ША СЪН ΔΕРЪ ВЪ ΜΟΝΑСТΗРН ѿ
 ΠΙΤНОН ΗΔΕЖЕ Ε ΧΡΑ ΨСІЕННЕ ΠΡЪ СΤΗΔ ΒЦН Н ΠΗСΟΔВН
 ΜΑΡΙΑ ~ В ΑΤΩ ϣСЦН³⁷⁴

(By the will of the Father, the aid of the Son, and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, John Stephan Voivode, lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, son of Bogdan Voivode, with the most pious Maria and with their beloved children Alexander and Bogdan-Vlad, made this aër at the monastery of Putna for the Church of the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God and always Virgin Mary in the year 6998.)

³⁷⁴ This is another case in which the symbol ϣC is used as a *koppa* representing the number 90 as it was on the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (number 42).

The year 6998 is 1489/90. The Stephen referred to in the inscription was Stephen III or Ștefan cel Mare. The “most pious Maria” was Maria Voichița, Ștefan cel Mare’s third wife. The Greek loanword *aep* (aër) is used in this inscription, but the iconography is an early example of the full expression of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography in Moldavian embroidery. Even though the iconography suggests that this textile was intended for use as an epitaphios, it is possible that a textile such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery could have been used both as an aër and as an epitaphios, as the use of the term “aër” in the inscription would seem to confirm. The term might, however, be a holdover from the period before a differentiation between aëres and epitaphioi. The evidence is insufficient to support an argument about whether aëres and epitaphioi were considered distinct objects by the time of Ștefan cel Mare’s reign.

The whole dedication is strikingly similar to the dedication on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios. The inscription on the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios cites Ștefan cel Mare’s grandfather Alexandru cel Bun, his pious wife, and beloved children. The titles on the two textiles, as well as the formulaic border inscriptions, and the similarity between in the treatment of the corners with the evangelist symbols would make it difficult to dispute that the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios must have had some influence on this embroidery from Putna. Another embroidery might also have had some effect on how this composition was handled, whether directly or indirectly. The lower right corner, with Matthew, has a rainbow of concentric arcs just as the other corners do, but it is treated differently. In the other three corners, the rainbow is in the right-angle corner where the borders meet. In the corner with Matthew, the rainbow joins the lower border to the curved border

surrounding the evangelist symbol. The figure of the winged man faces its rainbow rather than emerging from it. This is similar to the treatment of the corners on the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figure 50) on which all four corners are handled in a similar way.

That both the Żółkiew Aër-Epitaphios and the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios affected the handling of later Moldavian epitaphioi such as the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery is very likely. The older pieces probably were probably well known examples of the art of embroidery, at least among Moldavian embroiderers. The influence of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) is also apparent in the embroidery at Putna. We find, for example, very similar flower-like stars as a decorative motif in the space around the figures on both textiles. The numbers of angels differ between the two, but the poses of certain angels suggest that Ștefan cel Mare's embroiderers were indeed acquainted with the Serbian embroidery. The angel just above Christ's elbow and its counterpart above Christ's knees on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia are unmistakably similar to the lamenting angels above Christ on the Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare at Putna.

One final detail to observe attests to the originality of Ștefan cel Mare's embroiderers. The figure of Mary Magdalene, with her arms raised above her head in a gesture of lamentation is expressive but not particularly naturalistic. In fact, all the figures on this embroidery share a schematic quality, and the figural style compares unfavorably with examples such as Ephemelia and Eupraxia's or the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios. The deployment of the figures within the composition is, however, visually arresting. The figures fill the space of the composition without becoming crowded. The

figure of Mary Magdalene is especially interesting because her right hand overlaps the border surrounding the eagle that represents John. The first letter of the word ΔΔONTA is actually separated from the rest of the word by Mary's raised hand. It is a detail comparable to the wings of the angels on the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66) which overlap the border inscription on that embroidery. The texture of the surface is also visually arresting because of the range of couching patterns in the gold embroidery, patterns of great contrast placed in close proximity to one another (figure 70). All the figures of the narrative scene on Ștefan cel Mare's Putna Aër-Epitaphios overlap one another creating a dramatic space quite different from the handling of space on the Ephemia and Eupraxia Aër-Epitaphios or even the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios. It is theatrical, a scene in the unfolding drama of Christ's Passion as it had been depicted in wall painting for centuries. The difference between wall paintings of the Epitaphios Threnos and this embroidery is that the textile retains aspects (the deacon-angels) of the liturgical iconography of Christ as Amnos familiar from earlier aër-epitaphioi and retains the eschatological significance of the evangelist symbols.

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45. (Figures 71–76)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery.³⁷⁵

205 x 115 cm.

1494.

The Museum of Moldovița Monastery, Romania.

Gabriel Millet listed the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios as the sole representative of his group 2d.³⁷⁶ Oreste Tafrali and Dimitrie Dan listed this epitaphios among those in the treasury at Sucevița.³⁷⁷ It had, according to both Dimitrie Dan and Tafrali, passed from Moldovița to Dragomirna, and from Dragomirna to Sucevița in 1816. The original monastery, founded by Alexandru cel Bun in the early fifteenth century, was destroyed in the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century and rebuilt in a nearby location in 1531 by Petru Rareș, Ștefan cel Mare's son.³⁷⁸ The embroidery is now in the museum at the sixteenth-century Moldovița Monastery. This is large textile, over two meters long. It clearly emulates the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36) in aspects of its style and in many of the details of its iconography. Whether the influence is direct or indirect can never be definitively ascertained, but the resemblance is so strong that the work has even been attributed to the workshop of the Putna Monastery where the Serbian aër-epitaphios is now.³⁷⁹ Whether the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemelia and Eupraxia was at Putna as early as 1494 also cannot be known. If,

³⁷⁵ I saw this textile at the Moldovița Monastery Museum in July 2005.

³⁷⁶ It is listed with the Dionysiou Epitaphios in group 2d on page 102, but this must be an error because Dionysiou is assigned to group 2e on page 107. Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 102, 07.

³⁷⁷ Dan, *Mănăstirea Sucevița: Cu anexe de documente ale Suceviței și Schitului celui Mare: Aprobate de Academia Română*, 52; Tafrali, "Le Monastère de Sucevița et son trésor," 209.

³⁷⁸ Iorga and Balș, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien*, 47, 114.

³⁷⁹ Musée du Jeu de Paume, *Exposition de l'art roumain, ancien & moderne: au Musée de jeu de paume, à Paris, Du 25 Mai au 1er Août 1925* (Paris: Georges Petit, 1925), 49, catalog number 59.

however, we take the *Žółkiew Aër-Epithaphios* (catalogue number 26, figure 47) as evidence of the influence of the Serbian embroidery, then the *Aër-Epithaphios* of Ephemia and Eupraxia seems to have been in Moldavia as early as 1427.

If we compare the *Moldovița Aër-Epithaphios* of 1494 to the *Putna Aër-Epithaphios* of 1489/90 (catalogue number 44), there are enough differences in the figural style, in details of the iconography, and in the lettering of the inscription to doubt that these two embroideries were the products of the same group of embroiderers. The geographical and chronological proximity of these two works helps us account for their similarities, but their differences are too great to assign them to the same workshop. The figure of Christ on the *Moldovița Aër-Epithaphios* lies across the central space of the composition but without a shroud or stone slab. His arms are at his sides rather than across his torso, and his hands rest on his waist. Above Christ's chest is the abbreviation IC XC (Jesus Christ). At Christ's head, the seated figure of the Virgin holds Christ's shoulders. She is identified by the abbreviation MP ΘΥ (Meter Theou—Mother of God), which is embroidered within the figure who stands behind her. That figure is presumably one of the other two Marys, one of the *myrophoroi*, and she holds her left hand to her cheek. Here we can see how the split stitch embroidery follows the contour lines of the face and the outlines around the chin and fingers of this figure create a calligraphic effect (figure 72). At Christ's feet is the figure of John the Theologian, also seated, who holds Christ's feet with his bare hands. Behind him is the third Mary, the mirror image of the figure behind the Virgin. This figure is identified with the abbreviation ΜΑ behind her neck. This apparently indicates that she is Mary Magdalene.

In the space above the figure of Christ are five angels. Two deacon-angels flank the other three, each deacon-angel holding a rhipidion decorated with a six-winged seraph. Here the seraphim are not contained within circles. The other three angels are posed in gestures of lamentation, the center angel weeping into its sleeves and pointing downward as though flying in from above. Below the figure of Christ are four more angels. Two deacon-angels flank the other two angels in this grouping. The deacon-angels carry rhipidia decorated with six-winged seraphim. Here the seraphim are contained within circles unlike the rhipidia in the zone above the figure of Christ. The other two angels face each other but with their faces raised toward Christ. The group of angels at the top (figure 73) are embroidered in a different figural style from those at the bottom of the composition (figure 74). Those at the bottom are slightly more abstract. Their faces are simplified. The hair of the angels in the upper part of the composition is represented as curlier than the hair of the angels in the lower part. The differences suggest that at least two embroiderers worked on this piece, one working in a slightly more abstract style than the other.

An evangelist symbol is embroidered in each corner: the eagle of John in the upper left, the ox of Luke in the upper right, the lion of Mark in the lower right, and the winged man representing Matthew in the lower left. Only Matthew is identified with an inscription: ΜΑ. The curved borders around the evangelist symbols are filled with flower-like stars unmistakably similar to those embroidered in the background of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia (catalogue number 17, figure 36). The same motif also fills the space around the figures in the central panel. The background silk is blue. Gold embroidery is used extensively in halos, clothing, inscriptions, and decorative

motifs, but in a limited number of couching patterns. Few other colors are used: a light silk for the body of Christ and the faces of the other figures, dark brown silk for hair, red silk for shoes and in the corners.

The dedication inscription around the border is lengthy and follows the same formula as the dedication on Ștefan cel Mare's Aër-Epitaphios at Putna (catalogue number 44, figure 69). Some of the letters of the inscription are embroidered outside the border and within the central panel (figures 74 and 76). The inscription begins on the left side in the upper left corner and runs counterclockwise.

+ИЗВОЛЕНІЕ ѿЦА И СЪ ПОСПѢШЕНІЕ СНА И СЪВРЪШЕНІЕ /
СТГѢ ДХА ІѢ СТЕФАН ВОЕВѢ БЖІЮ МАТІЮ ГСПРЪ ЗМАН
МОЛДАВСКОН СНЪ БОГДАНЪ ВОЕВО И СЪ БЛОУЕСТНВОЮ /
ГСЖАН ЕГО МАРІИ И СЪ ВЪЗЛЮБЛЕННМН СВОИМН ДѢТН
АЛЕЃАНДРА / БОГДАН ВЛАДА СЪТВОРИША СЪИИ АЕРЪ ВЪ
МОНАСТІРН ѿ МОЛДОВИЦН НДЕЖЕ Е ХРАМ БЛАГОВѢШТЕНІЕ
ПРТѢН БОГОЦН В ЛТО ꙖЗВ МАРТ А

(By the will of the Father, the aid of the Son, and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, John Stephan Voivode, lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, son of Bogdan Voivode, with the pious princess Maria and with their beloved children Alexander and Bogdan-Vlad, made this aër at the monastery of Moldovița for the Church of the Annunciation of the most Holy Mother of God in the year 7002, March 1.)

The date may be interpreted in two ways since it is possible to read the final character in the inscription either as “А” or as “Λ.” Émile Turdeanu saw March 1, while Gabriel Millet saw March 30. When I saw this embroidery in July 2005, I was inclined to agree with Turdeanu. Although the final character is easy to mistake for “Λ,” the shapes of the two letters are rendered as consistently distinct from each other within the border inscription. Compare the name “АЛЕЃАНДРА” in the upper right corner (figure 75) to the date in the upper left corner (figure 76). The letters “А” and “Λ” are similar, with the left side of the letter being straight but at an angle to the completely vertical right side.

The letter “A” is curved on the left side. The final character of the inscription looks like the letter “A” elsewhere in the inscription, therefore the day was probably intended to be read as March 1. Either date, March 30 or March 1, means that the year (7002) was 1494. This embroidery was made within five years of the Putna Aër-Epitaphios of 1489/90, and in the same region. The style is very different, however, and the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios shows good evidence that more than one embroiderer worked on this textile. Both the Putna Aër-Epitaphios and the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios seem to owe a debt to the composition of the Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemias and Eupraxia. In their iconography and styles, however, the Putna and Moldovița epitaphios differ not only from the Serbian model but also from each other.

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46. (Figure 77)
Aër-Epitaphios of the Novgorod School.
60.5 x 57.5 cm.
Late 15th century.
State Historical Museum, Moscow (62 rb).³⁸⁰

N. A. Mayasova first published this embroidery in 1971.³⁸¹ The iconography is the full narrative Epitaphios Threnos, usually referred to as the “Entombment” in Russian examples. Christ is shown wrapped in the winding cloth and lying atop the sepulcher. The Virgin bends over from behind the tomb and embraces the body, her face pressed against Christ’s. To the right of the Virgin is John the Theologian. To John’s right is the bearded figure of Joseph of Arimathea. Behind John and Joseph is one of three women, the myrrophoroi. Another of the three woman stands behind the Virgin, her arms raised in a gesture of lamentation. The third woman sits to the left of Christ’s head, in the position more commonly taken by the Virgin in late fifteenth-century scenes of the Epitaphios Threnos. Mayasova assumed that one of the three women was Mary Magdalene, and proposed that the figure with her arms raised is the most likely candidate.³⁸² On the right side of the composition, behind Joseph of Arimathea, is Nikodemus holding a ladder, his head between the second and third rungs from the top. The cross rises behind the central grouping, a Russian type of cross with three cross beams, the titulus at the top and the angled crossbeam at the bottom.

On either side of the central group, and behind the figures are two rocky hills. On either side of the central scene are two angels. Here the angels are presented as archangels rather than as deacons and so the image is a more narrative version of the

³⁸⁰ Mayasova, *La Broderie russe ancienne*, number 19.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

Epitaphios Threnos scene rather than the liturgical version that was more common in early aër-epitaphioi such as the example from Ohrid (catalogue number 1, figure 1). At the top and bottom of the whole embroidery are two sets of three seraphim (six seraphim in all), shown in profile, each facing the center of the textile. The colors are mostly bright primary colors: red, blue and yellow drapery, a blue rocky hill on the left, and a green rocky hill on the right. Around the base of the sepulcher is a pattern of interlocking triangles irregularly alternating red, yellow, blue, and green. The small amount of gold embroidery is reserved mostly for halos and the cross. This embroidery has been removed from its original backing cloth and remounted on plain linen, the figures cut away from the original cloth and sewn as appliqués onto the new backing. The central grouping has been appliquéd as a whole piece. Each archangel and seraph is a separate piece. No inscription has survived. If the original state included an inscription, it was lost during restoration.

Similar in iconography and style to Russian icons of the late fifteenth century, this epitaphios closely resembles the famous late fifteenth-century icon of the Entombment, now in the Ostroukhov Collection in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (figure 175).³⁸³ The treatment of the rocks is especially characteristic of the late fifteenth century. The rocky hills are composed of almost quadrilateral shapes, as though the top of each rock is a plane set at an acute angle to both the picture plane and the ground line. The brilliant colors and dramatic gestures make the central scene a visually exciting account of the Epitaphios Threnos. With only the visual style as our guide, it is impossible to speculate very accurately about the probable date of the original embroidery. The similarity to

³⁸³ See, for example Mihail Alpatov, “The Icons of Russia,” in *The Icon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 247–48, 85.

icons of northern Russia in the late fifteenth century is our best clue. Because it is especially like the so-called Novgorod School of icon painting, N. A. Mayasova also attributed this textile to Novgorod. The object itself is our only evidence for such conclusions, but the late fifteenth century does seem the most likely period for the creation of this embroidery. The intended function of this object is another question we must consider. The small size suggests that it would have been appropriate for use as an aër. The iconography would also be consistent with an object intended for use as an epitaphios. Another possibility is that it was meant as an embroidered icon and not necessarily for liturgical use as either an aër or an epitaphios. Whether it was intended for use as an aër or as an epitaphios, or for some other purpose, is a question that cannot be answered definitively especially because of its fragmentary condition.

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47. (Figure 78)

Aër-Epitaphios of Manuel Ambaratopoulos, from the Nativity Cathedral of St. Therapontes.

71.5 x 48.5 cm.

Late 15th–Early 16th century.

History and Art Museum-Preserve, Kyrill-Belozersk Monastery, Russia (TIQ-504).³⁸⁴

This embroidery first entered the scholarly literature in 1855 when A. Muravev dated it to 1650.³⁸⁵ It is probably of a much earlier date than that, however, and subsequent scholarship has recognized this. As G. O. Ivanova noted, Muravev gave no explanation or references to support a date of 1650.³⁸⁶ I can find no evidence to confirm such a late date as 1650 for this aër-epitaphios, and we must rely on intrinsic evidence (style, iconography, technique, etc.) to establish a more plausible date. Although the embroidered surface is covered with abundant inscriptions, including the name of the patron, a date is not mentioned among them, but certain aspects of the iconography and style suggest a date of the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century. Not having seen this example in person, I cannot draw conclusions about the technique. Scholars have variously attributed this embroidery to Moldavia, Athos, Greece, and Moldova.³⁸⁷ I

³⁸⁴ This textile was acquired in the 1930s from the Nativity Cathedral of St. Therapontes Monastery. Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 66.

³⁸⁵ Andrei Nikolaevich Muravev, *Russkaia fivaida na sieverie* (Saint Petersburg: Kantseliarii, 1855), 384.

³⁸⁶ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 66.

³⁸⁷ The distinction between Moldavia and the modern country of Moldova might be irrelevant, the result only of a translating quirk. I am unaware of any extant medieval epitaphioi in the modern country of Moldova, but the absence of Moldovan examples from the scholarly literature does not necessarily mean that none actually survive. “Moldavia” is the English term used to refer to the whole region that straddles the border between the modern countries of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. “Moldavia” is also the name of the region within the post-World War II borders of Romania, sometimes also referred to as “Moldova,” although “Moldova” is also the name of the modern country that neighbors Romania to the east. “Moldova” is also the name used in Romanian to identify the whole region now distributed between the two countries. No

would add that it is also possible to argue, on iconographic grounds, for a Wallachian origin of the Ambaratopoulos Aër. I believe that it will be impossible convincingly to resolve the question of its origin, but there are reasons either to doubt or to support any of these attributions. The Aër-Epitaphios of Manuel Ambaratopoulos presents some special problems. The name of the patron embroidered on the object has not been associated with any person mentioned in other sources. Paleographic comparisons lead to no exact parallels. The iconography is our best clue, but it leads us in more than one possible direction.

A noteworthy aspect of the present state of this embroidery is that the background has been repaired by filling in all the space around the figures and inscriptions with blue, split-stitched silk thread.³⁸⁸ I am aware of two Moldavian examples of this kind of intervention, the Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66), and the Neamț Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 28, figures 50–52). It was also used to restore the Suzdal Aër (catalogue number 25, figure 46). When such a measure might have been taken is unknown. Even if we were to accept that this kind of restoration is characteristic of a particular region, this would still mean only that the Aër of Ambaratopoulos was at one point in that region or in the hands of a conservator from that region. All we can really conclude from the split-stitched background is that someone regarded this textile as important enough to take this kind of care to preserve it.

The inscriptions are all in Greek, and that points to an origin in Greece. It is possible even to argue that this embroidery comes from the Morea, but it will be

political opinion is implied by my use of any of these terms. I use the term “Moldavia,” in general, to refer to the medieval state known by that name to speakers of English.

³⁸⁸ Mayasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery*, 66.

necessary to describe important aspects of the composition before explaining the reasoning behind such an attribution. The figure of Christ lies on a shroud on a tomb. The Virgin is at his head, the cruciform halo taking up the space between her chin and her lap. She does not embrace his head, however, but pulls at her hair, as does the figure above Christ's chest. A third woman stands behind the Virgin. She looks up and toward the left side of the composition, her hands held up in a gesture of lamentation. John the Theologian bends over Christ from behind the tomb. John holds Christ's left hand. Christ's other hand is at his side, resting on his right hip. Joseph of Arimathea, posed as though wrapping Christ in the shroud on which the body lies, bends over Christ's legs. Nikodemus stands behind John and Joseph, one hand held up, palm toward the picture plane. Nikodemus' other hand, holding a censer, stretches across the middle of the scene just above the abbreviation ΙΣ ΧΣ. Two mourning angels hover above the censer. Two more angels, one in either of the upper corners, turn away from the scene as though fleeing in grief. At either side of the main group is a deacon-angel. Both hold a pair of rhipidia, a six-winged seraphim decorating each of the fans. At the bottom of the scene, in the foreground, is a crumpled shroud in a heap in front of the tomb.

The inscriptions are not lengthy, but they take up an unusual amount of the space within the central panel because of the bold, dynamic lettering. The letters are distinctive, and the dynamic style of lettering is similar to the figural style. The whole inscription seems to vibrate because of variations in the size of letters and the thickness of lines. I have found no other example of embroidered lettering that matches this example closely enough to attribute them to the same embroiderer, workshop, or even region. As is usual, the title of the scene appears above the central group of figures: (to the left of the

mourning angels) Ο ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΣ (and to the right of the mourning angels) ΘΡΗΝΟΣ (Epitaphios Threnos). The dedication runs across the bottom of the composition on either side of the crumpled shroud: ΜΗΣΘΗΤΙ Κ(υρι)Ε ΤΗΣ ΨΥΧΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ΙΕΡΩΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΜΠΑΡΑΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ (Remember, O Lord, the soul of your servant Manuel the priest of Ambaratopoulos). The inscription around the border begins in the upper left corner, continues down the right side, jumps to the left side, and concludes along the bottom border. It is clearly meant to be read while the textile is displayed in a position that shows the Epitaphios Threnos composition upright. The inscription is derived from the liturgy for Holy Saturday Orthros, and it begins in the border across the top.

+ΤΩΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ Ο ΔΗΜΟΣ ΚΑΤΕΠΛΑΓΗ ΟΡΩΣ ΣΕ ΕΝ ΝΕΚΡΟΙΣ // (in a column down the right side) ΛΟ/ΓΙΣΘ/ΕΝΤΑ/ ΤΟΥ ΘΑ/ΝΑΤΟΥ / ΔΕ Σ(ω)Τ(ερ) / ΤΗΝ ΙΣ/ΧΗΝ // (in a column down the left side) ΚΑΘ/ΕΛΟΝ/ΤΑ Κ(αί) ΣΥΝ / ΕΑΥ / ΤΩ / ΤΟΝ // (across the bottom) ΑΔΑΜ ΕΓΕΙΡΑΝΤΑ Κ(αί) ΕΞ ΑΔΟΥ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΩΣΑΝΤΑ*

(The ranks of angels were awed to see you dead, destroying the citadel of death, O Savior, and raising Adam and releasing everyone from Hades.)

The inscription and the narrative scene of the Epitaphios Threnos embroidered within the border taken together tend to confirm that this object was intended for use as an epitaphios rather than as an aër. Nevertheless, I would hesitate to propose that this is sufficient evidence to conclude that the two types, aër and epitaphios, were distinct from each other as they are now.

The iconography is a version of the fully developed narrative Epitaphios Threnos, a version of the Threnos iconography that, with some variations, seems to have made its debut on liturgical embroideries in the second half of the fifteenth century. Earlier examples of the Threnos scene on embroideries tend to include only the Virgin and John,

but this scene, like the one securely dated late-fifteenth century example (Putna 66— catalogue number 44, figure 69) also includes Joseph, Nikodemus, and the myrrophoroi. Other examples that include Joseph and Nikodemus also might be earlier than 1490 (the date of Putna 66), but even on those examples the iconography is slightly different. On the Stieglitz Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 35, figures 59 and 60), for example, Joseph and Nikodemus are merely present and barely noticeable. On the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios, Joseph and Nikodemus are characters in an illustration of a narrative.

The iconographic type had been around for some time. As Kurt Weitzmann and Gabriel Millet both observed, the Epitaphios Threnos iconography ultimately derives from the Entombment, which dates back as early as the ninth century.³⁸⁹ Aspects of the development of these iconographic types are discussed in Chapter 2 of Part I. By the time of the earliest extant embroidered aëres and epitaphioi, the Epitaphios Threnos as we know it now was already fully developed in church fresco programs. A very close iconographic parallel to the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios was painted at the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now Saint Kliment) at Ohrid (figure 103). In that fresco the pose of John the Theologian is nearly identical to the pose of the same character as presented on the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios, albeit in mirror image because the composition is reversed. There is also a figure pulling her hair near the head of Christ, but she is not the Virgin. The angels in the zone above the central grouping at Ohrid, though more numerous, play the same roles in the drama.

It is beyond the scope of this catalogue essay, and even beyond the scope of this whole study, to trace every instance of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography in fresco and

³⁸⁹ Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*; Weitzmann, "The Origin of the Threnos," 477.

other media. There are, however, two examples of the scene in fresco that are similar in certain details to the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios. The Church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Mistra, usually dated to the second half of the fourteenth century, includes both the Threnos and the Entombment.³⁹⁰ The Threnos scene at the Peribleptos Church (figure 149), in typically poor condition for monuments at Mistra, has much in common with the fresco at Ohrid, but there are few figures. Figure 150 is a line drawing published by Gabriel Millet.³⁹¹ The figure of Nikodemus in particular is closer to the Nikodemus on the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios. Closer still is the Threnos at the Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeş in Wallachia (figures 130–131). The church and the paintings have been subjected to several rounds of restoration over the centuries, but the basic iconographic scheme and the earliest surviving paintings within the church probably date from the fourteenth century, about the same time as the frescos at the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Mistra.³⁹² Here again are the Threnos and the Entombment side by side.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Suzy Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, vol. 4, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970), 13; Gabriel Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux xive et xve siècles, recueillis et publiés par Gabriel Millet, avec le concours de Henri Eustache, Sophie Millet, Jules Ronsin et Pierre Roumpos, album de 152 planches* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910); Tania Velmans, *La Peinture murale byzantine à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. André Grabar and Jean Hubert, Bibliothèque Des Cahiers Archéologiques (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1978), 203.

³⁹¹ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*, plate 122, 4.

³⁹² Maria Ana Musicescu and Grigore Ionescu, *Biserica domneasca din Curtea de Argeş* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1976), 21–31; Oreste Tafrali, *Monuments byzantins de Curtea de Argeş*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1931); Velmans, *La Peinture murale byzantine*, 210–11.

³⁹³ Unless we accept only the narrowest definition of the term “Byzantine,” this example and the one at Mistra mean that Kurt Weitzmann was mistaken when he wrote, “While it is correct to say that the Entombment and the Lamentation of Christ are two distinct scenes it is important to realize that even in the richest narrative cycles we have

The arrangement of the central grouping at Curtea de Argeş is closer still to the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios. The angels are absent from the Curtea de Argeş Threnos, but the rest of the figures are strikingly similar in their poses, although not in the figural style in which they were rendered. The detail of the crumpled shroud in front of the tomb is also present at Curtea de Argeş. I do not believe that comparisons to wall paintings can help us to date an embroidery like the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios. The iconography of the Epitaphios Threnos appeared in embroidery at a much later date than it had in painting. When it did, examples such as the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios show that it was adapted to the specific function of the object: the addition of the deacon-angels makes sense on an epitaphios since the iconography on the textile combines the Epitaphios Threnos iconography with the image of Christ as Amnos. In wall paintings the image of Christ Amnos would usually be found in the bema. The Epitaphios Threnos is most often found on the northern wall, in a northern conch, or within the north arm of a transept, when it occurs among wall paintings in programs of church decoration. The role that the deacons play on the embroidered epitaphios has to do with the function of the object as a liturgical textile. The similarity of the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios to the Curtea de Argeş wall painting does tempt us to choose the closest iconographic parallel and assign this embroidery to the same region. In this case, however, the language of the inscription contradicts that connection. The painting at Mistra might, then, be considered the more important comparison.

That the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios looks more like the type of Epitaphios Threnos scene that we find at Mistra or in Wallachia does not mean that the embroiderer

in Byzantine art they never occur side by side.” Weitzmann, “The Origin of the Threnos,” 476.

necessarily saw either painting. It does suggest that the artist was familiar with a tradition that extended from Moldavia south to Mistra. This is a broad region, and it might be possible to narrow this down on iconographic or stylistic grounds. The one clue that does help us is the inscription, all of which is in Greek. I am inclined, therefore, to suspect that this embroidery comes from Greece, and specifically the Morea rather than Athos. I must point out, however, that this is essentially a guess based on subjective impressions of similarity rather than on any evidence that can be objectively evaluated. The date when it traveled to St. Therapontes is another question that cannot be answered. Gabriel Millet noted how similar was the iconography of the Borispol Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 36, not illustrated) to the Threnos at the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos at Mistra.³⁹⁴

I would suggest, instead of arguing for an attribution based on the evidence of iconography and style, that we learn a different lesson from the comparison of embroidery to painting. The unique features of any late Byzantine or post-Byzantine work of art simply indicate that there was a rich vocabulary of iconographic types for any artist to draw upon for a new expression of that type. It may be that an embroidered epitaphios like the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios helped to transplant an iconographic type to Russia from Greece, but this is merely speculation that would push the date of the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios to a period before the 1480s, the likely period of the Borispol Aër-Epitaphios. Unless and until the Manuel Ambaratopoulos mentioned in the inscription can be positively identified, I will suggest only that the Ambaratopoulos Aër-Epitaphios is possibly from the late fifteenth century and probably from Greece.

³⁹⁴ Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*, 515.

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48. (Figure 79)

Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios.

115 x 72 cm.³⁹⁵

Ca. 1400–1500?

Schloss Autenried Icon Museum, Ichenhausen, Germany (Inventory number 59).³⁹⁶

The Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios is an intriguing embroidery, but it is badly damaged and heavily restored. Little of the original backing cloth survives, and the figures have been attached as a group to a new backing cloth. The border inscription is also damaged, and the end of the inscription is illegible in photographs. The iconography that survives includes Christ on a slab near the bottom of the composition. The letters O ΩN (He who is) are embroidered within the cross arms in Christ's halo. The Virgin bows to embrace Christ's head from behind. A mourning woman pulling her hair is positioned behind the Virgin's head. John the Theologian, shown from the waist up, is positioned near Christ's feet but does not touch them. A ciborium is embroidered over Christ and the Virgin. Two lamps hang under its pointed dome. Two full-length deacon-angels stand at either side of the central panel. Each holds in one hand a rhipidion embroidered with the word ΑΓΙΟΣ. In the other hand each angel holds a censer. Much of the embroidery is couched silver or silver-gilt thread. The original background was crimson silk, but the figures have been remounted on a black velvet background.³⁹⁷ The hood and robe of the mourning woman is blue. Blue is also used within the hood over the Virgin's head. Red is used in John's sleeve and in the robes of the angels, and red silk is also used at the bases

³⁹⁵ Antonius Fountoucidis, ed. *Welt der Ikonen: Ausstellung vom 4. Juni bis 6. Juli 1963: griechische und russische Ikonen des 13.–18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Galerie Ilas Neufert, 1963), 17.

³⁹⁶ According to an auction catalog of 1960, this textile came to the Schloss Autenried Museum from the Bernheimer collection. The restorations, when the figures were attached to the new background cloth, were carried out ca. 1925. Rothmund et al., *Katalog des Ikonenmuseums*, 20–21, and note 1 on page 21.

³⁹⁷ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 39, note 44.

of the lamps. Flesh-colored silk is used for faces, hands, and the body of Christ. Brown silk is used for hair. The embroiderers used a limited palette of colors, but each color has been used effectively. The poses of the figures, and the use of color, might be described as stoical.

The hymn “Noble Joseph,” the troparion for Good Friday, is embroidered around the border, beginning in the upper left.

+Ο ΕΥΣΧΗΜΩΝ ΙΩΣΗΦ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΞΥΛΟΥ ΚΑΘΕΛΩΝ ΤΟ ΑΧΡΑΝΤΟ
ΣΟΥ / ΣΩΜΑ ΣΙΝΔΩΝΙ ΚΑΘΑΡΑ ΕΙΛΗΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΩΝ/ΑΣΙΝ ΕΝ
ΜΝΗΜΑ[...]

(The Noble Joseph, having taken down from the wood your most pure body and having wrapped it in a clean sheet together with pure spices [and laid it] in [a new] grave...).

The rest of the inscription is damaged and impossible to decipher from the published photographs.³⁹⁸ B. Rothemund also discerned the names “Ortaris” and “Sivia” in the inscription. Both Rothemund and E. Trenkle report a date of 1400 embroidered on this epitaphios.³⁹⁹ Pauline Johnstone pointed out that, while the letters adduced as evidence of a date in the inscription (AY) could certainly be construed as the date 1400 (A=1000, Y=400), dates in 1400 were usually expressed not in the modern way (*Anno Domini*) but from the creation of the world (*Anno Mundi*).⁴⁰⁰ We would, therefore, expect 1400 to be “spelled” ϞϚϠΗ (6908). As mentioned in the introduction to this catalogue, there is at least one example of a date in this period expressed as *Anno Domini* rather than *Anno Mundi*. The inventory of the fifteenth-century *Testament* of the monk Neilos Damilas is

³⁹⁸ I have not seen this embroidery in person.

³⁹⁹ Rothemund, *Byzantinische und russische Stickereien*, 16; Rothemund et al., *Katalog des Ikonenmuseums*, 20–22; Trenkle, *Liturgische Geräte und Gewänder der Ostkirche*, not paginated.

⁴⁰⁰ Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 39, note 44.

dated ρανιζ' (1417), but S. P. Lambros pointed out that this was a very early example of such a date, the earliest of which Lambros was aware.⁴⁰¹ No other aër or epitaphios is dated in this way, however, so Johnstone's skepticism about the dating of the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios to the year 1400 is justified. The letters AY could belong to a word within the inscription, or they might have been part of a later restoration that updated the style of dating. That is speculation, however, and we are left to reason our way toward a proposed date with only iconography and style as our guides.

The iconography would also be somewhat unusual for 1400. Pauline Johnstone noted that the ciborium had not yet been introduced into scenes of the lamentation embroidered on aër-epitaphioi, and that this piece should be dated "much later" than 1400.⁴⁰² That is a minor point, which can be countered by speculating that this would be the earliest extant example of an embroidered aër-epitaphios with a ciborium. It was also not much later that the ciborium began to appear in Russian examples, such as the aër-epitaphioi of Basil I and the Metropolitan Photios (catalogue numbers 20 and 23, figures 39 and 44 respectively) of the early fifteenth century. The ciboria on the Russian epitaphioi were smaller, however, and the ciborium on the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios looks rather like the kind that would become common in Greek embroidery of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The 1682 Epitaphios of Despoineta in the Benaki Museum (figure 135) has a ciborium of similar proportions.⁴⁰³ The most we

⁴⁰¹ Lambros, "Das Testament des Neilos Damilas," 585, and note 1.

⁴⁰² Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*, 39, note 44.

⁴⁰³ Benaki 33604. It is erroneously identified as Benaki 34604 in Fotopoulos, Dionissi, and Angelos Delivorrias, eds. *Greece at the Benaki Museum*. Athens: Benaki Museum, 1997, 307.

can really say about the ciborium is that it would have been unusual on an aër-epitaphios in 1400.

The pose of the Virgin on the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios finds its closest parallel in the Cozia Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 15, figure 30), of 1395/6. While the pose of the Virgin suggests an early date, the ciborium suggests a later date. I doubt, however, that this embroidery should be dated much later than 1500 because certain details of style suggest a date in the late fifteenth century. The wings of the right deacon-angel, for example, are presented in a style very much like the wings of the mourning angels in the 1484 Vatra-Moldoviței Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 42, figure 66). Such an argument from style is intriguing but not logically sound. Any embroiderer at any later date might imitate the style of an earlier embroiderer. For the Schloss Autenried Aër-Epitaphios a date of sometime between the 1390s and 1500 is as precise a date as I can deduce from the meager evidence.

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49. (Figures 80–82)

Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery.⁴⁰⁴

180 x 150 cm.

1506.

National Museum of Art, Bucharest, Romania (Inventory number 1047).⁴⁰⁵

According to the dedicatory inscription embroidered around its border the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios was commissioned by Ștefan cel Mare before his death in 1504. It was completed in 1506. It is the last epitaphios associated with Ștefan cel Mare and the most complete expression of the narrative Epitaphios Threnos iconography of the three embroidered epitaphioi associated with this great patron. This epitaphios represents the culmination in medieval Moldavian embroidery of the development from the aër into the epitaphios as we understand those terms today. Because of the iconography, I would be willing to categorize this as an epitaphios, but the inscription refers to it as an “aër.” I do not believe that we have sufficient evidence to claim that this object, or any textile of this period, is truly an epitaphios, distinct from an aër, in the sense that we understand the distinction in modern practice.

The iconography of the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios differs slightly from the 1489/90 Putna Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 44, figure 69). It lacks one of the figures, either John the Theologian or Nikodemus, but it adds the sun and the moon. It also adds a landscape. It is also in a very different style from both the Putna Aër-Epitaphios and the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 45, figure 71). A formalized abstraction mutes the drama of the Epitaphios Threnos iconography on the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios. Nevertheless the abstraction and emotional restraint become

⁴⁰⁴ I saw this embroidery at the National Museum of Art, Bucharest in July 2005.

⁴⁰⁵ Edinburgh Festival Society and the Arts Council of Great Britain in association with the Rumanian State Committee for Culture and the Arts, *Rumanian Art Treasures, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 29.

part of the visual interest, rather than detracting from the effect of the image, while interesting uses of color and lettering also contribute to the effectiveness of this embroidery as liturgical art.

The figure of Christ lies on a slab, the standing figure of the Virgin holding his halo as though the halo itself has substance. Behind the Virgin are two women, myrrophoroi. One holds her hand to her cheek, and the other pulls her hair like the figure usually identified as Mary Magdalene on the Neamț Aër-Epithaphios (catalogue number 28, figures 50 and 52). At Christ's feet is the standing figure of Joseph of Arimathea holding Christ's feet. Joseph's hands are covered. Only one other male figure appears in this scene. The figure behind Joseph, also bearded, appears to be Nikodemus rather than John the Theologian. This would be unusual, and Pauline Johnstone actually identified the figure as John.⁴⁰⁶ The figure is bearded, however, and John is usually shown beardless. Nikodemus is usually presented as a bearded figure. The figure also stands behind Joseph, a typical position for Nikodemus, who amounts to Joseph's sidekick in both the Biblical accounts of his participation in this part of the passion. John is usually a more central character, sometimes literally central within the composition of paintings and embroideries, and is often shown holding Christ's hand. On the Dobrovăț Aër-Epithaphios Christ's arms are folded over his torso. It seems that John has been omitted and Nikodemus has been included.

In the zone above Christ are the sun (on the right) and the moon (on the left). Between the sun and the moon are three angels: two deacon-angels carrying rhipidia decorated with images of six-winged seraphim flank the third angel with its hand to its

⁴⁰⁶ Pauline Johnstone, "Church Embroidery in Rumania," *RRHA* 1 (1964): 124.

face in a gesture of lamentation. In the zone below Christ the same arrangement is repeated with the addition of a second lamenting angel. The deacon-angels at the bottom also carry seraph-topped rhipidia, and none of the seraphim is contained within a circle. In each corner is one of the evangelist symbols. The eagle of John in the upper left, the ox of Luke in the upper right, the winged man representing Matthew in the lower right, and the lion of Mark in the lower left. All the figures on this epitaphios have halos, including all the characters in the narrative scene, all the angels, and all the evangelist symbols. A limited and stylized landscape fills some of the space around the figures in the zone below the figure of Christ (figure 81).

Embroidered in gold is the abbreviation IC XC (Jesus Christ) just above the shoulder of Christ. None of the other figures within the narrative scene of the Epitaphios Threnos is identified with an inscription. The evangelist symbols are identified with their names fully spelled out and followed by the words that precede the Epinikion (ᾄδοντα, βοῶντα, κεκραγότα, και λέγοντα) as on the Putna Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 44, figure 69) and other Moldavian examples. These words are curiously absent from the Moldovița Aër- Epitaphios (catalogue number 45, figure 71). The inscriptions on the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios fill the curved borders that separate the corners from the rest of the central panel. In the upper left is ἸΩΑΝΝΕΣ ΑΔΩΝΕΥΤΑ (John Singing); ΛΟΥΚΑ ΒΟΩΝΤΑ (Luke Crying) is in the upper right; ΜΑΡΚΟΣ ΚΕΚΡΑΓΟΥΤΑ (Mark Shouting) is in the lower left; and ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΟΥΝΤΑ (Matthew And Saying) is in the lower right.

Most of the backing silk is gone, but it must have been of a dark blue or another dark color. Pauline Johnstone saw it as a dark brown.⁴⁰⁷ The background in the border is green. One shade of blue silk is used in the rainbows in three of the corners with a different shade in Mark's corner. The stitches in the silk thread within the figures are tight and small and they tend to create stiff contours (figure 82) rather than the calligraphic contours created by the silk embroidery in the figures on the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 45, figure 72). Outlines are stitched in colored silk of yellow, red, and green. Joseph's hands are covered, but there is no shroud between Christ and the stone unless the geometric pattern around Christ is meant to be understood as a representation of a textile. Pauline Johnstone compared this pattern to "peasant weaving."⁴⁰⁸ The pattern is embroidered with red and blue silk in a zigzag pattern.

The lengthy and unusually informative dedicatory inscription echoes the formula used in the dedicatory inscriptions around the borders of the Putna and Moldovița aër-epitaphioi. The dedication on the Dobrovăț Aër-Epitaphios begins in the upper left corner and runs around the border clockwise.

†БЛАГОУСТНВЪИИ И ХСТОЛЮБНВЪИИ ІСѢ СТЕФАН ВОЕВОДА
БЖІЕЮ МАСТІЮ ГСПРЪ ЗЕМАН МОЛДАВСКОН НАУА СЪТВОРНТИ
СЪИ ДЕР МОНАСТІРЮ СВОЕМОУ ꙗ ДОБРОВ/ЕЦА И ШТО ПОСТНЖЕ
ЕГО СЪМРТЪ И НЕСЪВРЪШИИ ЕГО А СНЪ ЕГО БОГДАН ВОЕВОДА
Б/ЖІЕЮ МАСТІЮ ГПРЪ ЗЕМАН МОЛДАВСКОН И СЪ МАТЕРЕЮ
СВЄЕЮ ГПЖЕЮ МАРІЕЮ СЪВРЪШИША ЕГО И ДАДОША НХ
НАДЕЖЕНСѢ БЫЦАНЬ БЫ ВЪ ЗАДШЕ СТИСѢ ПОУН/ВШАГО ГИ
СТЕФАН ВОЕВОДА И ЗА СВОЕ ЗАРАВІЕ И СПІСЕНІЕ В АТСѢ ЗАДА ФЕ А

(The very pious and Christ-loving John Stephan Voivode, Lord of all Moldavia by the grace of God, had this aër begun for the monastery of Dobrovăț, but it was incomplete at his death and his son Bogdan Voivode, by the grace of God lord of all Moldavia, with his mother the lady Maria, had it finished and gave it as

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

promised, for the rest of the soul of the saintly lord Stephan Voivode and for his (Bogdan's) health and safety in the year 7014 February 1.)

The year 7014 converts to 1506, almost two years after the death of Ștefan cel Mare in 1504. This is, therefore, the last extant epitaphios associated with the reign of Ștefan cel Mare, one of the most important patrons in the history of embroidery and the history of liturgical textiles of the Orthodox Christian Church.

The inscription also gives us a sense of how long such a large embroidered textile might have taken to complete, although we cannot know whether work continued apace during the entire period between the date of the commission and the date of the completion of this epitaphios. Work might have been interrupted by the death of Ștefan cel Mare. We also cannot know whether the dedication can even be taken at its word. Did Ștefan cel Mare actually make the original commission, or is this only Bogdan's display of filial piety? If we take the inscription as an accurate statement, and if we assume that work was not interrupted, then it took at least two years to complete this embroidery. Bogdan, the patron who takes credit for having the work completed and having it given to the monastery for which it was intended, was Bogdan III cel Orb (the Blind) who was also the Bogdan-Vlad mentioned in the dedicatory inscriptions on both the Moldovița Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 45) and the Putna Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 44). Maria, Bogdan's mother, was Maria Voichița, the Wallachian princess and the third wife of Ștefan cel Mare.

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Appendix A: The Turin Shroud

I have chosen to reserve discussion of the Turin Shroud (figure 119–120) for this appendix because I doubt that the Shroud, or the image it bears, is relevant to the history of aëres and epitaphioi. I must, however, explain my skepticism, which is the purpose of this essay. The Turin Shroud is a subject famously fraught with controversy, both scholarly and theological, and it has inspired an extensive bibliography of frequently passionate debate. Significantly for the study of Byzantine art, the literature about the Turin Shroud has included the argument that the type of image we find on epitaphioi copies, or indirectly refers to, the image on the Turin Shroud. This is a point that Paul Vignon addressed in a study of the Turin Shroud in 1938, but Vignon’s conclusion was skeptical about such a connection.¹ How could the epitaphios develop in Constantinople in the fifteenth century when the Turin Shroud had been taken away during the Fourth Crusade? The connection must be remote, rather than direct, Vignon suggested, although he did conclude that there must be some connection after all.² I agree with scholars like Gary Vikan, however, who argue that it was painted images in churches and embroidered images on liturgical textiles that influenced the person who made the Turin Shroud, rather than the other way around.³

¹ Paul Vignon, *Le saint suaire de Turin, devant la science, l’archéologie, l’histoire, l’iconographie, la logique* (Paris: Masson, 1938), 186.

² *Ibid.*, 187–88.

³ Gary Vikan expressed this idea recently in a lecture at Princeton University. Gary Vikan, “When St. Luke Painted the Virgin—Musings on Things Not Made by Human Hands,” (Lecture presented as part of the conference “Arts of the East—Byzantine Studies in Princeton” organized by the Index of Christian Art. Princeton, New Jersey, October 16, 2008).

Scholars continue to examine the relationship between images embroidered on epitaphioi and the image on the Turin Shroud (figure 120).⁴ Some authors, Ian Wilson in particular, have argued that embroidered epitaphioi constitute evidence that the shroud predates the fourteenth century, but Wilson was aware of an important example that Vignon did not consider.⁵ The difference in iconography between the epitaphioi that Vignon knew and the image on the Turin Shroud caused Vignon to express some skepticism about the connection between epitaphioi and the Turin Shroud. The Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (catalogue number 2, figures 5–7), however, presents iconography that is very similar to the image on the Turin Shroud.⁶ Wilson saw on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin “an image so strikingly reminiscent of the Shroud’s front-of-body image that, whether directly or indirectly, it can hardly be other than that image’s progeny or precursor.”⁷ While Wilson nodded to the possibility that the embroidered image could have been the precursor to the Turin Shroud, he presented this possibility only as part of an argument about “works of art strongly indicative of the Shroud’s earlier existence *somewhere*.”⁸

⁴ Piero Cazzola, “I Volti santi e le Pietà,” in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone: un modello per l’arte cristiana*, ed. Lamberto Coppini and Francesco Cavazzuti (San Paolo: Edizione San Paolo, 2000), 161–4; Theocharis, “‘Epitafi’ della Liturgie Byzantina e la Sindone.”; Ian Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud: New Evidence That the World’s Most Sacred Relic Is Real* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 137; Ian Wilson, “Icône ispirate alla Sindone,” in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone: un modello per l’arte cristiana*, ed. Lamberto Coppini and Francesco Cavazzuti (San Paolo: Edizione San Paolo, 2000), 84.

⁵ Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, 137.

⁶ The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos (catalogue number 3, figures 8–9) presents a similar image, but Ian Wilson never mentioned that example probably because he was unaware of it.

⁷ Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, 137.

⁸ The emphasis is Wilson’s. Ibid.

In other words, Wilson argued that art made before the fourteenth century and decorated with an image that looks like the image on the Turin Shroud proves that the Turin Shroud existed before the fourteenth century. This argument is easily dismissed, however, if only because it is possible to imagine that there was a common source for the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin and the Turin Shroud. We could also credit Byzantine artists with enough creativity to imagine what a miraculous image of Christ on a burial shroud might look like. We ought to bear in mind that the artist of the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin meant to create an image that resembled not an acheiropoietos but an image of the body of Christ lying on a shroud. Perhaps these are fine distinctions, but such possibilities mean that the similarity of the image on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin to the image on the Turin Shroud does not prove that one influenced the other.

The other aspect of this argument about the relationship between epitaphioi and the Turin Shroud that invites critique is that the argument itself is not valid. It is a good example of begging the question. Although Wilson and others never state the argument so plainly, the implied argument can be summarized this way: if the Turin Shroud is older than the oldest epitaphios, then the image on the shroud must have influenced the artists who decorated epitaphioi; and since the images on epitaphioi resemble the image on the Turin Shroud, then the Turin Shroud must predate the earliest epitaphios. Not all arguments about the Turin Shroud are so obviously invalid. In fact, such circular reasoning is rather rare, even for scholars who would argue that the Turin Shroud is actually the historical burial shroud of Jesus. Most of their arguments must, and can, be

discredited simply by scrutinizing the premises upon which their arguments are constructed.

Yet even such a prominent scholar as Hans Belting has written that the image embroidered on the Aër-Epitaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin “alludes to the Shroud of Turin, understood to be the original of the image.”⁹ Belting later altered his point somewhat writing that the Shroud of Turin was a copy of the lost original, and other images like the Turin Shroud copy the original, “historical” shroud in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Christ.¹⁰ Many writers have claimed, however, that the Turin Shroud itself was the model for images on aëres and epitaphioi. The purpose of this essay is to question that claim.

The Turin Shroud is sometimes referred to as the Turin Sindon, and those who study the Shroud are called sindonologists. “Sindon” is simply the Greek word for “cloth” (or “sheet” in Modern Greek), and has usually been translated as “linen cloth” specifically, but it is also the word used to refer to the shroud that Joseph of Arimathea used to wrap the body of Christ, as related in Matthew 28:59–60, Mark 16:46, Luke 23:53, and John 19:40. The story is also related in the apocryphal Gospel of Nikodemus, also known as the Acts of Pilate, which closely follows Luke 23:50–3 in this part of the story.¹¹ Sindonologists study the Turin Sindon, and sindonology is a field that has produced an extensive bibliography during the last several decades. A quick Google

⁹ Belting, *The Image and Its Public*, 126.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that Belting’s revised version of this idea appeared in his book *Likeness and Presence*, which was published—including the original German edition—after the results of the carbon dating of the Turin Shroud had been made public. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 210, and 576, note 8.

¹¹ Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 177.

search reveals the extent to which this object has preoccupied a great many professional and amateur sindonologists.¹²

After each ostension of the Shroud, there is an increase in the number of publications. There were two ostensions at the end of the twentieth century, in 1998 and in 2000, which were part of the observation of the turn of the millennium. As a result, there were several publications about the Turin Shroud in those years, some of which are included in the list of references at the end of this essay. Unfortunately, if not surprisingly, the material available in print and on the Internet is overwhelmingly dedicated to “proving” that the Turin Shroud is actually the shroud in which Jesus of Nazareth was wrapped and buried in the first century. The image on the Shroud is regarded as a miraculous image, a kind of first-century photographic negative of Christ.¹³ A miraculous image, as the image on the Turin Shroud is believed by some to be, is called an *acheiropoietos*, an image not made by human hands. If a convincing argument could be made in favor of the view that the Turin Shroud is actually a miraculous image, then the Shroud itself could be used in turn as evidence to argue for the validity of Christianity.

Not surprisingly, then, the relatively few scholars like Gary Vikan and Walter McCrone who have devoted considerable time and effort to arguing that the Turin Shroud

¹² Among the most important Web sites dedicated to supporting the theory that the Turin Shroud is the actual burial shroud of Christ is the one maintained by Barrie Schwartz, which Ian Wilson mentioned in one of his books. Barrie Schwartz, ed., “The Shroud of Turin,” <http://www.shroud.com>; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, 19.

¹³ Much has been made of this notion that the image on the Shroud is a photographic negative of a three-dimensional figure, but the values of the image (the areas of light and dark) are difficult to reconcile with this theory unless the beard and blood of the figure were of a lighter value than his skin. Such arguments also assume that no artist is capable of forging a convincingly naturalistic image and that the image must therefore have been created through a miraculous photographic process.

is not actually the shroud in which Jesus of Nazareth was wrapped and buried have received harsh criticism, even hostility, as their reward. Negative responses to McCrone's and Vikan's arguments appeared in the pages of the popular magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review* after that magazine published their views on the subject.¹⁴ *Biblical Archaeology Review* was, perhaps, not the publication with the most receptive readership for the views of Shroud skeptics like Vikan and McCrone. McCrone's book about his experiences as a Shroud researcher, *Judgement Day for the Turin Shroud*, also chronicles the kind of problem a scientist faced in taking on the Shroud as a research project:

He should also expect (this I say more in retrospect) that any suggestion the Shroud is not authentic, will result in bitter denunciation from the millions of believers in the Shroud.... Far more serious...is the feeling among some scientists that because they are convinced the Shroud is real, anything said or done on behalf of the Shroud is justified and must be true because they know the Shroud is the burial Shroud of Christ. Anything propounded to the contrary must then be wrong and the person propounding such blasphemous lies should be censured. Very unfortunately, this happened with some of the Shroud scientists.... Some felt so certain the Shroud had to be real they were willing to make statements and report results that would have been true only if the Shroud were real.¹⁵

McCrone's book describes not only the unscientific atmosphere of credulity that he encountered but also the kinds of tests to which the Turin Shroud was subjected.

¹⁴ Vikan's and McCrone's pieces appeared in the November/December issue, 1998. Responses, all of it hostile, followed in the March/April 1999 issue on pages 16–20 and 66. Barrie Schwartz has provided additional, unpublished responses to the pieces by Vikan and McCrone on his "Shroud of Turin" Web site. Walter C. McCrone, "The Shroud Painting Explained," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 24, no. 6 (November/December 1998), 29; Gary Vikan, "Debunking the Shroud: Made by Human Hands," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 24, no. 6 (November/December 1998): 27–29; Schwartz, "The Shroud of Turin."

¹⁵ I have retained the spelling of the word "Judgement" as it appears in the title of McCrone's book. The emphasis on the word "know" in the passage quoted is also McCrone's. Walter C. McCrone, *Judgement Day for the Turin Shroud* (Chicago: Microscope Publications, 1997).

McCrone's own research involved the microscopic analysis of material taken from the Shroud. Analyzing samples taken from parts of the Shroud, McCrone determined that the image was created with red ochre pigment in a liquid medium.¹⁶ Some arguments about the Shroud's authenticity depend upon the presence of actual blood where there appears to be "blood" in the image.¹⁷ McCrone, however, found that "There is no blood on the 'Shroud.'"¹⁸ The methods of scientists like McCrone, and even McCrone's temperament, have been called into question. Even other scientists have painted unflattering portraits of McCrone.¹⁹ Personal grievances and ad hominem attacks are unfortunately quite common in discussions of the Shroud. I would argue that any scientific analysis of the Turin Shroud is of limited value anyway.

Arguments about the Turin Shroud fall into two basic categories: scientific and historical. The results of scientific analysis can be used only to lend weight to arguments from the historical evidence, whether those arguments confirm or refute the authenticity of the Shroud as an acheiropoietos. For any arguments about the "authenticity" of the Shroud to make sense, we must assume that the Shroud either is or is not evidence of something believed by some to be historical fact. If the Shroud were not believed to have some connection to Jesus of Nazareth, the question of what the Shroud is would be quite different. For science, whether or not there is blood on the Shroud is a simple "yes or no" question, but the answer matters a great deal if it can be used to confirm or question one's

¹⁶ Ibid., 90–107.

¹⁷ Ian Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin: The Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1978), 56–60; Wilson, *The Blood and the Shroud*, 85.

¹⁸ The emphasis on the word "no" is again McCrone's. McCrone, *Judgement Day*, 106.

¹⁹ H. E. Gove, *Relic, Icon or Hoax? Carbon Dating the Turin Shroud* (Bristol and Philadelphia: Institute of Physics Publishing, 1996), see especially 15.

religious faith. Unfortunately, as McCrone found, science actually has no effect on religious faith. It is the other way around.

In fact, the science that has been used by both sides of the debate is not really necessary to either side except as an exercise. If a Christian wants to accept that the Turin Shroud is an actual acheiropoiotos, then no amount of evidence against the Shroud's authenticity is likely to be persuasive. It might, in fact, be completely irrelevant. A Christian need only accept the image on the Turin Shroud as a miraculous image of Jesus, dismissing scientific and historical evidence to the contrary in much the same way some proponents of Creationism dismiss the evidence of the fossil record. I do not, however, mean to suggest that everyone who might hope to prove that the Turin Shroud is a genuine acheiropoiotos is necessarily a Christian. Adherents to other religions might conceivably have an interest in proving that a miraculous image is possible. A skeptic, however, need only read the historical evidence to be satisfied that the authenticity of the Turin Shroud as an acheiropoiotos is, at best, questionable.

Arguments about the Turin Shroud abound, nonetheless, and within the two basic categories of science and history are numerous detailed arguments that have been debated at length. Most of that debate, if published material is an indication, has happened only since the middle of the twentieth century. The arguments about the Turin Shroud have been concerned with the historical record and with certain aspects of the Shroud's physical properties. In the realm of science we find that sindonologists are especially concerned with three questions: how was the image made; what is the material used to create the image on the cloth (whether miraculously or not); and when was the cloth itself made? In the realm of history we confront one main question: when was the Turin

Shroud first mentioned? Along with this question about the historical record are several related questions. The most important of these is whether the Turin Shroud can be identified with objects that are mentioned in the historical record earlier than the first verifiable mention of the Turin Shroud.

Other questions also relate to historical research. For example, does the image on the Shroud match the Biblical description of Christ's Passion so that the body seems to be in the kind of condition we would expect? Is the image on the Shroud an accurate representation of the first-century burial in Jerusalem? Questions like these raise other questions. If the image appears to show the kind of wounds the Bible describes, does that mean the image is authentic or only that the artist was a careful reader? If the image on the Shroud is an accurate representation of the first-century burial in Jerusalem, does that support the authenticity of the Shroud as an *acheiropoietos* or does it only demonstrate the cleverness of a person who painted the image? To examine all these questions closely is not the goal of this essay. I will only summarize a few of the arguments.

The first significant offering from a skeptic came in 1900 when Ulysse Chevalier published a dossier and analysis of the historical material relevant to sindonology.²⁰ One of the most important pieces of evidence cited in that book was a document from a bishop who maintained that the man who painted the image on the Shroud had admitted as much to a previous bishop.²¹ The document is dated 1389 and refers to events of approximately thirty-four years earlier. The bishop was instructed to go along with the ostension of the Shroud, but it was agreed that the Shroud ought to be identified to the crowd by an

²⁰ Ulysse Chevalier, *Étude Critique sur l'origine du St Suaire de Lirey-Chambéry-Turin* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1900).

²¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix G, vii–xii.

attending priest as only a painting and not the true burial shroud of Christ.²² On the basis of such evidence, Ulysse Chevalier argued that the Turin Shroud is not the true burial shroud of Christ.²³ The earliest datable text that seems unquestionably to refer to the very cloth now known as the Turin Shroud, the document that Chevalier cited, indicates that 1355 was earliest year to which we can date the Turin Shroud in written history.²⁴ There are other arguments about the exact year, but the decade of the 1350s seems to be the period when the Shroud is first known to have existed.

The value of historical evidence depends, of course, upon its authenticity. In the end, of course, the truth is unknowable, but certain arguments can be rationally dismissed. For example, a favorite argument among those who maintain that the Turin Shroud is an authentic *acheiropoietos* concerns another *acheiropoietos*. Robert of Clari's account of the Fourth Crusade includes a passage in which he mentions a *sydoine* at the Church of the Blachernae in Constantinople.²⁵ I have already quoted that passage in Chapter 2. It is not at all clear which relic it was that Robert of Clari described, but the passage has been cited as evidence that the Shroud of Turin was in Constantinople until the Fourth Crusade.²⁶ Robert of Clari's report is questionable at best, however. As several scholars have noted, he seems to have conflated the *sindon* and another cloth relic, the *sudarium*, and both relics are believed to have been at the Great Palace and not at the

²² Ibid., 28 and Appendix K, xvii.

²³ Ibid., 26.

²⁴ Many scholars have cited these documents, but Joe Nickell offered a useful summary in the first Chapter of his 1983 book about the Shroud. Joe Nickell, *Inquest on the Shroud of Turin* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1983), 11–13.

²⁵ Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, 90.

²⁶ Vignon, *Le saint suaire de Turin*, 104.

Blachernae.²⁷ If Robert of Clari's report can be questioned then so can any attempt to identify the object he described with the Turin Shroud.

It is actually the sudarium, an object believed by some to have been the same cloth relic now usually called the Mandylion, which has been the focus of one of the most complicated arguments. The Mandylion is a lost relic that showed only the face of Christ. Its history is too complicated to unravel here, but Ian Wilson and others have argued that the Mandylion is identical to the Turin Shroud. Wilson has argued that the Shroud was kept folded so that, when it was displayed, only the face of the image was visible.²⁸ The importance of this idea for proponents of the Shroud's authenticity as an acheiropoietos has to do with pushing back the date when the relic is known to have existed. If 1355 is the earliest date that we can claim the Turin Shroud is known to have existed, then it will be useful to identify the Shroud with another relic known to have existed earlier, and the Mandylion is believed to have existed much earlier. Just how much earlier is another question. If it is to be taken as evidence that the Turin Shroud is the actual burial shroud of Christ then the Mandylion will have to be datable to the first century. Averil Cameron has thoroughly discredited this idea by demonstrating that the Mandylion cannot be dated to the first century.²⁹

In her classic paper delivered at a time when the world awaited the results of the first radiocarbon dating of the Shroud, Cameron did not assail the argument, which is essentially sound, but she carefully explained why one of the two main premises is false.

²⁷ Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, 112, note 19; Nickell, *Inquest on the Shroud of Turin*, 53–54.

²⁸ Wilson, "Icône ispirate alla Sindone," 79–85; Wilson, *The Shroud of Turin*, 92–103.

²⁹ Cameron's lecture "The Sceptic and the Shroud" is one of the classic critiques of this theory.

While she did address the theory that the Turin Shroud might have been folded and mistaken for a small cloth with only the image of Christ's face, Cameron focused on the question of whether the Mandylion can be dated to the first century. Expertly using historical evidence Cameron showed that the Mandylion probably did not exist before the sixth-century at the very earliest. The legend of Mandylion might even have developed in response to a theological need for such an image.³⁰ Cameron even pointed out that the historical evidence to do with the Mandylion is unclear about whether the Mandylion was always thought to be an image on cloth since it might also have been described as a painted icon.³¹ By the end of her essay, Averil Cameron's conclusion is inescapable: "those who believe that the Shroud of Turin may be genuine cannot also identify it with the Mandylion."³²

In recent decades the Turin Shroud has been a test case for the value of radiocarbon dating technology to what is essentially a theological dispute. Radiocarbon dating, however, is not a prerequisite for a convincing argument in favor of the view that the Turin Shroud was made during the fourteenth-century. It does help, nonetheless, to have the findings of "hard" science as a resource for confirming historical research. The results of the carbon dating experiments conducted on the Turin Shroud were released in October 1988 when the date of 1325 ± 33 years was announced officially.³³ The result of the radiocarbon dating experiment therefore supports the view that the Shroud was made during the fourteenth century. Harry Gove's account of the long process, and of the personalities he encountered, is told from the point of view of one of the most important

³⁰ Ibid., 11–12.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

³² Ibid., 13.

³³ Gove, *Relic, Icon or Hoax?*, 287.

scientists involved in the project. Gove concluded his book by stating that the Shroud was, in his view, “not a hoax and, unless a plausible, scientifically valid reason is found for the radiocarbon date being too young, it cannot be a relic.”³⁴ It is, in Gove’s opinion, an icon. Gary Vikan, on the other hand, has argued persuasively for interpreting the Turin Shroud as a hoax:

How is it, finally, that we know for certain that the Shroud of Turin is a fake? Without prejudicing the possibility that one or more among history’s several dozen acheiropoietai may be genuine, we can be positive that this one cannot, since, according to its carbon 14 dating, it could not possibly have come into contact with the historical Jesus. Yet it would be incorrect to view the Shroud of Turin as just another icon, because it was very clearly, very self-consciously doctored in order to become what millions, until recently, have taken it to be: an image not made by human hands. And these, unlike icons, can only be one of a kind.³⁵

In other words, since it was clearly meant, by the person or persons who made it, to look like a relic, the Turin Shroud was not intended to be only an icon. The painter of the Turin Shroud intended to deceive.

No historian can “prove” anything about history by arguing from information in texts that have been transmitted to us; nor can scientific evidence really be construed as proof of anything beyond any doubt. The weight of combined historical and scientific evidence, however, can be taken reasonably as confirmation that one interpretation of the past is more plausible than another. In the case of the Turin Shroud, I interpret all the evidence of which I am aware as supporting a date of the mid-fourteenth century for that textile. If that is the correct date, then the Turin Shroud cannot have had any effect on how the iconography on embroidered aëres and epitaphioi developed before that date.

³⁴ Ibid., 309.

³⁵ Vikan, “Debunking the Shroud,” 28.

References:

This list of references includes only a small but representative sample of the works I have consulted directly. This is only a tiny fraction of the vast body of literature that has been written on the subject of the Turin Shroud. A more extensive bibliography can be found at the end of William Meacham's article "The Authentication of the Turin Shroud: An Issue in Archaeological Epistemology" at pages 309–11. Meacham's article is also followed by comments from several other authors of differing opinions. Much more has been published since 1983, but the bibliography that followed Meacham's article provides a more extensive list than would be practical to include here. The following list does include a few of the important publications of the past twenty-five years.

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- . *The Shroud of Turin: The Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?* Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1978.

Appendix B: Tables

The tables on the following pages are offered only as visual aids. Preparing them was a useful exercise while I wrote this dissertation. While they lend support to my theory that the iconography that decorated epitaphioi became ever more “narrative” in response to the changing liturgy, I have tried to use them cautiously. They were actually most useful in exposing the limitations of the kind of reasoning they represent.

Attempting to assign the textiles listed in my catalogue to groups according to iconographic type reveals above all that each textile is in some way unique. There are broad categories to which we can assign them, as discussed in Chapter 3, but such categories necessarily reveal the interests or assumptions of the author. Gabriel Millet, for example, discussed sixteen of the textiles listed in the catalogue in Part II.¹ He assigned them to two main groups and eight subgroups based on iconography.² Millet’s groupings were clearly designed by an author who assumed that there was a development, an evolution if not a teleological progress, toward the epitaphios as we understand its function and iconography in the Orthodox Christian church of the twentieth century. Comparing traits the various textile have in common, Demetrios Pallas grouped and regrouped the examples he discussed according to different sets of criteria, including iconography and inscriptions.³ Pallas’ approach is more satisfactory than Millet’s in that it acknowledges that the unique combination of elements of any textile can cause it to be compared to many examples that are otherwise very different from one another. While

¹ Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 86–109.

² Millet actually used nine subgroups in all, but the last textile he listed dates to 1545, which is outside the scope of my catalogue. *Ibid.*, 107–108.

³ Pallas, “Der Epitaphios,” 789–806.

Pallas' approach is more complex than Millet's, it is not essentially different from it because he assigned them to categories according to iconography and inscriptions.

My approach here is only another variation on such categories of epitaphioi, but I present these categories as evidence of how they can affect how we understand the relationships among textiles. For the following tables I have devised a set of eight general types of iconography only as an aid to understanding the development of the general iconography over time and across the geographical distribution. There are as many possible groupings or types of iconography as there are elements within the most complex example. I arrived at these eight types by generalizing about the iconography of each example. While this set of types takes geographical tendencies in iconography into account, I am mostly concerned with the extent to which any example can be described as "narrative" rather than "liturgical." I have explained the distinction between "narrative" iconography and "liturgical" iconography in Chapter 2. Since one of my main concerns in Chapter 2 was to describe how the iconography on epitaphioi became gradually more "narrative," I have organized the eight types in Table 1 and Table 3 to reflect this. The most important criterion, then, is which figures or "characters" were included, rather than how those figures were arranged within a composition. In the eight types that I have proposed, I am not at all concerned with technique or figural style. If we were to consider different criteria—such as composition, inscription, technique, or style—we could devise any number of entirely different categories. Again I must stress that my creating these tables was only an exercise, cautiously undertaken and meant only to create visual aids for understanding geographical and chronological distribution of eight very general types. Such an exercise is clearly useful to understanding how iconography changed over time

and differed from one region to another, but I hope that the limitations of using of such categories are also apparent.

The choices I have made in organizing my catalogue are discussed in the introduction to Part II. In general I have favored a strictly chronological arrangement, to the extent that such an arrangement is possible. In Chapter 3 I have described the eight types I listed in Table 1 and Table 3. The types correspond roughly to stages in the chronological development of iconography that can be observed in the catalogue. It was type 6, however, rather than types 7 or 8, that became more common by the end of the seventeenth century, as discussed in Chapter 3. I must stress here that the approach I have taken to organizing my catalogue, and the necessary abandonment of groups such as the eight types I have used in these tables (or those proposed by Gabriel Millet) in organizing my catalogue, is a response to the uniqueness of each example. That one aër-epitaphios resembles another within close geographic or chronological proximity is not accidental, but a reductive system of categories cannot account for all the variations in iconography or other criteria. The problem is even more complex when we also consider the inscriptions as part of the iconography. Pallas' treatment of the subject made this quite clear.⁴ The variations, the unique aspects of each textile, as well as similarities to other textiles, nonetheless help us to understand the history of embroidered aëres and epitaphioi.

The question of geographical distribution is also complex. The Ohrid Aër-Epitaphios (catalogue number 1, figures 1–3), for example, refers to “the Bulgarians” in its inscription. The object is now in the modern country of Bulgaria, but the place for

⁴ Ibid.

which it was made is now in the country usually referred to as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the following tables, then, the place name “Bulgaria” refers not to the modern country but to the political power that controlled the region around Ohrid at the time the embroidery was made. A later example from the same region might be referred to as “Serbian.” In general, however, I have referred to each geographical region by the name of the modern country that takes in that territory. I have, for example, lumped Novgorodian and Muscovite embroideries into the geographical category of “Russia,” and I have referred to Moldavia and Wallachia collectively as “Romania.” “Greece” generally refers to a Greek-speaking region. Geographical names in the following tables therefore refer to cultural and linguistic regions rather than to political boundaries. Geographical names in the following tables also refer either to the location where the object was made or to the location for which it was made, not necessarily its present location. I have categorized the Ohrid Aër-Epithafios as Bulgarian because it was presented to a Bulgarian church even though it was made at the behest of, or in memory of, a Byzantine emperor. It was probably made somewhere other than the place to which it was presented, possibly in Thessaloniki or Constantinople. Since we do not know where it was made, but we do know the place for which it was made, an example like catalogue number 1 is simply assigned to the place name we do know. The assignment to a geographical group is not in every case the most satisfactory, or even strictly accurate. It is merely a practical solution to a complex problem.

The first three tables below have to do with the question of iconographic types, mine in Table 1 and Table 3, Millet’s in Table 2. The fourth table is an attempt to compare chronological distribution to geographical distribution of the examples listed in

my catalogue. The fifth table is a list of all the examples from my catalogue presenting their approximate dates, their types, their groupings in Millet's system, and the geographical locations where they were made or for which they were made. The last table is simply a list noting which examples in my catalogue were also listed or discussed by N. P. Kondakov, Gabriel Millet, Pauline Johnstone, and Demetrios Pallas.⁵ These authors have been responsible for the basic works that anyone first investigating the subject of *aëres* and *epitaphioi* would be most likely to consult.

⁵ Kondakov, *Pamiatniki*; Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*; Johnstone, *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*; Pallas, "Der Epitaphios," 789–806.

Table 1: The chronological distribution of eight types of aër-epitaphios iconography.

Decade	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	Type 7	Type 8
1295– 1309			4,5					
1310– 1319								
1320– 1329	2		1					
1330– 1339	3							
1340– 1349			6					
1350– 1359	Turin Shroud	7, 8						
1360– 1369								
1370– 1379			13					
1380– 1389		9						
1390– 1399				15				
1400– 1409		17	10, 11, 21	19, (48?)		23, 24		
1410– 1419								
1420– 1429		26				20, 22	27	
1430– 1439		18			28			
1440– 1449			33		30			
1450– 1459		29			31	34, 37		
1460– 1469			38				32	
1470– 1479								
1480– 1489		42			(40?), 41		44	
1490– 1506			39		45	35	47, 49	46

Table 2: Chronological distribution of Gabriel Millet's groups. The numbers listed in this table are the numbers assigned in the catalogue in Part II of the present study. The group numbers are Millet's, but the proposed dates are mine.

Decade	1a	1b	1c	1d	2a	2b	2c	2d
1295– 1309			4					
1310– 1319								
1320– 1329	2	1						
1330– 1339								
1340– 1349			6					
1350– 1359	8							
1360– 1369								
1370– 1379								
1380– 1389								
1390– 1399						15		
1400– 1409		11, 21		17	19			
1410– 1419								
1420– 1429								
1430– 1439				18			28	
1440– 1449								
1450– 1459								
1460– 1469								
1470– 1479								
1480– 1489	42						44	
1490– 1506								45

Table 3: The eight types of aër-epitaphios iconography are arranged in this table by geographical distribution (based on the location where the object was made or the location for which it was made, not necessarily its present location).

Type	Greece	Serbia	Bulgaria	Albania	Russia	Romania	Georgia
Type 1	3	2					
Type 2	8, 9	7, 17, 18				26, 29, 42	
Type 3	4, 5, 10, 21, 38, 39	6	1, 11	13	33		
Type 4	48	19				15	
Type 5					30, 31	28, (40?), 41, 45	
Type 6					20, 22, 23, 24, 34, 35, 37		
Type 7	47					27, 44, 49	32
Type 8					46		

Table 4: The aër-epitaphioi listed in tables 1 and 3 are arranged again in this table to compare chronological distribution to geographical distribution (the origin or intended destination for each one, not necessarily its present location).

Decade	Greece	Serbia	Bulgaria	Albania	Russia	Romania	Georgia
1295–1309	4,5						
1310–1319							
1320–1329		2	1				
1330–1339	3						
1340–1349		6					
1350–1359		7, 8					
1360–1369							
1370–1379				13			
1380–1389		9			14		
1390–1399						15	
1400–1409	10, 21, (48?)	17, 19	11		23, 24		
1410–1419					25		
1420–1429					20, 22	26, 27	
1430–1439		18				28	
1440–1449					30, 33		
1450–1459					31, 34, 37	29	
1460–1469	38						32
1470–1479							
1480–1489					36, 43	40, 41, 42, 44	
1490–1506	39, 47				35, 46	45, 49	

Table 5: All the aëres and epitaphioi listed in the catalogue in Part II.

Catalogue number	Figure numbers	Date	Type	Millet's group	Origin
1	1–3	Ca. 1328	3	1b	Bulgaria
2	5–7	Ca. 1321	1	1a	Serbia
3	8–9	Ca. 1330	1	—	Greece
4	10–15	Ca. 1300	3	1c	Greece
5	16	Ca. 1300	3	—	Greece
6	17–18	Ca. 1346	3	1c	Serbia
7	19–20	Ca. 1354	2	—	Greece
8	21	Ca. 1350	2	1a	Greece
9	22	Ca. 1384	2	—	Greece
10	23	Ca. 1400	3	—	Greece
11	24	Ca. 1400	3	1b	Bulgaria
12	25	?	3	1b	?
13	26–28	1373	3	—	Albania
14	29	1388/89	—	—	Russia
15	30–31	1395/96	4	2b	Romania
16b	34–35	?	3	— ⁶	?
17	36	Ca. 1405	2	1d	Serbia
18	37	Ca. 1439	2	1d	Serbia
19	38	Ca. 1400	4	2a	Serbia
20	39–40	Ca. 1425	6	—	Russia
21	41–42	1406/07	3	1b	Greece
22	43	Ca. 1425	6	—	Russia
23	44	Ca. 1408	6	—	Russia
24	45	Ca. 1400	6	—	Russia
25	46	Ca. 1416	—	—	Russia
26	47	1427/28	2	—	Romania
27	48–49	Ca. 1427	7	—	Romania
28	50–52	1436	5	2c	Romania
29	53	Ca. 1450	2	—	Romania
30	54	1440/41	5	—	Russia
31	55	Ca. 1450	5	—	Russia
32	56	Ca. 1466	7	—	Georgia
33	57	1448/49	3	—	Russia
34	58	1455/56	6	—	Russia
35	59–60	Ca. 1500	6	—	Russia
36	—	Ca. 1486	? ⁷	—	Russia
37	61–62	Ca. 1450	6	—	Russia
38	63	Ca. 1460	3	—	Greece
39	64	Ca. 1500	3	—	Greece
40	—	1480/81	5?	—	Romania
41	65	1481	5	—	Romania
42	66	1484	2	1a	Romania
43	67–68	1485	—	—	Russia
44	69–70	1489/90	7	2c	Romania
45	71–76	1494	5	2d	Romania
46	77	Ca. 1500	8	—	Russia
47	78	Ca. 1500	7	—	Greece
48	79	1400?	4	—	Greece
49	80–82	1506	7	—	Romania

⁶ Although Millet did not assign the Vatican Aër-Epitaphios to one of his groups, he did mention this lost textile. Millet, *Broderies Religieuses*, 89.

⁷ Gabriel Millet's description of this lost epitaphios suggests that it belongs to type 8. Given the patron and the date, however, it was more likely to have been an example of type 6. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*, 515.

Table 6: This table shows which aër-epitaphioi in the catalogue in Part II were also mentioned by Kondakov, Millet, Johnstone, and Pallas in the following works:

Johnstone, Pauline. *The Byzantine Tradition in Church Embroidery*. Chicago: Argonaut, 1967.

Kondakov, Nikodim Pavlovich. *Pamjatniki christianskago iskusstva na Athonje*. St. Petersburg: Izdanie Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1902.

Millet, Gabriel. *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*. Paris: Ernest Leroux 1939, Presses Universitaires de France, 1947.

———. *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV, XV, et XVI siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont Athos*. 1916, Paris, Fontemoing. Reprint, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1960.

Pallas, Demetrios I. "Der Epitaphios." In *RbK*, Volume 5, 789–806. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1995.

In the following table, an "X" indicates that an author mentioned an example that I have listed in the catalogue in Part II. For specific page references, see the reference list at the end of the catalogue entry for each textile. Both Kondakov and Millet described number 36. Millet referred to it only in his *Recherches sur l'iconographie* (page 515), so he did not assign it to one of the groups he devised for *Broderies Religieuses de Style Byzantin*. Except for number 36, Pallas included in his article for the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst* all the epitaphioi mentioned by Kondakov, Millet, and Johnstone. Pallas also listed a few examples not mentioned by those scholars, but every example mentioned by Pallas had already been published by another scholar.

Catalogue	Kondakov	Millet	Johnstone	Pallas	Catalogue	Kondakov	Millet	Johnstone	Pallas
1	X	X	X	X	26	X	X	X	X
2		X	X	X	27				
3					28		X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X	29				X
5					30				X
6		X	X	X	31				X
7					32				
8		X		X	33	X			X
9					34	X			X
10					35				
11		X		X	36	X	X		
12		X	X	X	37				
13				X	38				X
14					39				X
15	X	X	X	X	40				
16b		X		X	41	X	X		X
17	X	X	X	X	42		X	X	X
18		X		X	43				
19	X	X	X	X	44	X	X	X	X
20				X	45		X		X
21		X	X	X	46				
22					47				
23					48			X	X
24				X	49			X	X
25									

Appendix C: R. F. Borough's "A Recent Visit to Nicæa"

The following article was first printed in 1925 in *The Christian East*.¹ In Chapter 4 I described this article as typical of nineteenth and twentieth-century Medievalism and Orientalism. Written by R. F. Borough, Chaplain of the Crimean Memorial Church in Constantinople (Istanbul), the article relates the adventures that Borough had while attempting to acquire an embroidered epitaphios (figures 137–138). The epitaphios that Borough purchased at Nicaea is now at Canterbury Cathedral.² Since I have discussed the article itself at length in Chapter 4, and because the periodical in which it appeared is not readily available in every library or on the Internet, the text is worth presenting here in full. The annotations are my own.

A Recent Visit to Nicæa³

A Friend of mine, more youthful and venturesome than I, had left Constantinople not long before on a trip across Asia Minor into Syria, and was determined to see Nicæa on his way. But when I received a mysterious doubly-registered letter with Turkish stamps I never guessed what its purport would be. He had found at Nicæa that the Muchtar had the "epitaphion," or embroidered representation of Christ in the Tomb, which a Turkish soldier had looted from the destroyed Church of Our Lady and sold to him. This was offered to him for 200 liras (about £20), but not being able to spare the money in cash, in view of the long journey before him, he gave the Muchtar a retainer of five liras and wrote and begged me to go there, hand over the cash, and bring back the relic.

I had always vowed I would never go farther east than Constantinople, which I felt was my limit of endurance as to filth, discomfort, and general barbarity, but here was something from the church at the historic Nicæa, and 1925 was the sixteen-hundredth anniversary of the Council, and so I felt it ought to be done.

¹ Borough, "A Recent Visit to Nicaea."

² See Mary Symonds (Mrs Guy Antrobus) and Louisa Preece, *Needlework through the Ages: A Short Survey of Its Development in Decorative Art, with Particular Regard to Its Inspirational Relationship with Other Methods of Craftsmanship*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 255 and Plate XLV number 5 between pages 158 and 159.

³ I have retained the original spellings (including hyphenation) and punctuation of the article as it appeared in 1925. All italics are original. I have inserted numbers in square brackets to indicate the original page numbers at the point in the article where each page begins.

First came the question of route, and I was told to go by Brusa, where they said it was possible to get motor-cars and drive the fifty miles or so to Nicæa: then the police permit had to be secured. After this a friend who had experience and official knowledge drew an alarming picture of the dangers of the lonely road, and the madness of going all alone with a good sum of money on me and a complete ignorance of Turkish, and urged me to make sure that the Ambassador acquiesced before starting. However, the Embassy officials, who had just got back from Angora, seemed rather annoyed that I should have been made at all uneasy, and so at nine o'clock in the morning on the Eve of Lady Day I took the steamer for Mudania, finding, when afloat, that not a soul on board understood anything but Turkish. A police officer took away my permit, and explained in dumb show that I should get it back when I landed. This was at one o'clock, but it was a full hour before the train for Brusa started, the examination of permits taking all that time. It was with some misgiving that I found we were off without having received this very necessary official document, but all turned out right, as a policeman had boarded the train and distributed the permits on the way.

The train was crowded, but again not a single French-speaking person was to be found, and so I contented myself with newspapers and the thought that, as the terminus was Brusa, I had only to sit still until I could go no farther, for it should be realised that the names of the stations in "Frank" letters have now been all obliterated. However, I had an unexpected reward for offering chocolate to the two Turks sitting opposite, who had heard the policeman ask if [67] I was going to Hotel Brotte (the only European one) and made me understand, when we stopped at a station *en route*, that I ought to get out there. Arrived at the hole, which seemed rather stuffy and dingy, I got my first shock when the French-speaking waiter (a Jew from Adrianople) said it was impossible to get farther than Yeni-Shehir by motor-car or carriage, and that beyond there I should have to go on horseback for four hours. I was not equipped for riding. It promised to be really wet next day; I should have to pass the night at Nicæa and could not take a change of raiment under such conditions. Also, I had never learnt to ride. My attempts to do so when a boy on the only animal we possessed (a large carriage-horse) having ended in a rooted preference for a bicycle, so that I knew it would be four hours of misery, and another four on the way back the following day. However, I felt it would have to be done somehow, but luckily I found that after all it was possible to get a conveyance at Yeni-Shehir that would take me on, and so I was able to start early next morning in comfort with my suitcase. I was advised that I should be less conspicuous if I wore a fez, and I found it very comfortable but for a tendency to ride back at every jolt, and on a Turkish road the jolts are reminiscent of a telegraphic machine being operated in a nightmare. It had been pouring with rain all night, and there was a nasty wet drizzle when we started, so the roads were worse than ever, and in one place where a piece had been mended a dwarf wall had been built right across to force all traffic to turn off into fields at the side. This meant dropping down a steep bank three or four feet high, and I began to think the car would never get up again when we stuck in the sticky clay repeatedly. But after the seven or so attempts of Bruce's spider⁴ we just managed it and I was landed at Yeni-Shehir rather sooner than had been promised.

⁴ The reference here is to the legend about Robert the Bruce whose determination was awakened by observing a spider try and try again to climb a wall until it succeeded.

Here I ate sandwiches in a dirty café (readers who don't know the East must not conjure up visions of the somewhat dirty places in France called by the same name, which are comparatively Eldorados), which a conveyance was secured to cover the rest of the way. This was a "talika"—a kind of wagon without seats and a low curved top. You climb through a hole in the side and are supposed to sit cross-legged on the floor: this my legs refused to do, and to sit for long with your knees up to your chin produces a nasty spinal jar, and while you can lean your back against the side you must either keep your head stuck forward or have it continually knocking against the hard wood. The better kind of talika is fitted with a mattress, but this one had nothing but sacking that kept "rucking up." The track began as a ploughed field and developed into a river-bed, and it when it wasn't either it was the two mixed. Sometimes it was on the edge of a precipice with awkward corners, and when the driver had nearly succeeded in pitching the whole caboodle [68] over the edge sideways, by getting the inner wheel over a boulder a foot high, and the outer one on the extreme edge in his effort to avoid the former, he would look round at me with a merry grin for approval of his cleverness, while I cogitated on the fact that if our unstable equilibrium *had* been upset there would have been no possibility of my jumping clear, but down I should have gone in my cage. On the whole the scenery between Brusa and Nicæa is not unlike that of the Low Peak district of my native county of Derby, though my opportunity of observation was bad—you can't see much from a talika, and my motor-car was covered in owing to the rain.

At last Nicæa, at the eastern end of the beautiful lake of the same name, could be seen in the distance, or rather the square plan of the ancient walls, but it was another hour before we finally rattled through the massive triple gateway, only half ruined, the roadway beneath it reminding you of a very dirty and badly-kept farmyard. The village inside, if it can be called so, is nothing but a collection of sordid hovels, far worse than I expected. With a rather sinking heart I asked for Ibrahim Effendi (everybody in Turkey is an Effendi) the Muchtar, and found that he was one of the knot of men busily sitting doing nothing at my elbow as I alighted. Although he knew quite well what I had come for he was not effusive, and afterwards I found out why. Then I asked for the "Han," and was dismayed to find that, although new-built, it was just a dirty café like any in the back streets of a Constantinople slum, with a couple of rooms above it, the only difference being that it had no floor but was just built on the earth. There I left my bag and went off to do my deal with Ibrahim. He had told my friend that I must arrive before Ramazan, or he would not be able to do business, but although the fast had begun that very day he showed no hesitation of any kind, except that he demanded 25 liras (two pound ten) more than he had agreed with my friend.⁵ Of course he knew I shouldn't come all that way and go back with nothing, and so had the whip hand, but he evidently expected me to bargain and possibly spend the whole of the next day doing so, and it is a good example of the

⁵ The total price paid by Borough was £22 and 10 shillings, a considerable sum in 1925. The amount that Borough paid would be roughly equivalent to \$1,000 or more today, as discussed in Chapter 4. In 1968 Burton Berry listed the value of the epitaphios he purchased as \$2,500. Taking into account inflation from 1925 to 1968, as well as the relative values of British and American currency in 1968, Berry paid a good deal more for his epitaphios, which is now in the Indiana University Art Museum in Bloomington, than Borough paid for the epitaphios from Nicaea referred to in this article.

“honesty” of the simple country Turk. However, the blood that runs in my veins has never known what haggling is, and besides, my one and only idea was to do what I’d come for and clear out as quickly as could be, and so the extra extortion was paid (like Abraham buying the cave of Macpelah from Ephron the Hittite)⁶ and the treasure wrapped up in newspaper and delivered into Christian hands on Lady Day, 1925, having been the property of Our Lady’s Church until the Greek evacuation. The church itself is now nothing but a heap of tiles and dust, though the foundations are still there. The Church of St. Sophia was turned into a mosque long ago, and has also long been roofless, but [69] the walls and the minaret still stand. On the site of the altar is a little blacksmith’s furnace, and round the apse hang bundles of tobacco-leaf to dry. The small mosque is untouched and now in use.

I offered a French-speaking Turk, who represented a tobacco company, and acted as my dragoman, a supper with me at the Han, and although the conditions were such that I thought it lucky I got through without being sick, the food itself was not bad, or I was desperately hungry. The place was crowded with men of the “hamal” type, who eyed me curiously, and the Ramazan drummer came in, gave us a an obligato and solo, and asked for baksheesh, and my friend ordered a narghileh⁷ for himself, which I found I had to pay for. As soon as I decently could I withdrew to “bed.” A bed there certainly was, with a mattress, a quilt, and a flat bolster, but I didn’t dare to take off more than boots, coat and waistcoat, and collar, and so I lay down as I was on top of the quilt rather than under it, and put a couple of rugs of my own over me. There was a very strong smell of stale tobacco, dirt and unwashed humanity mixed, but in spite of that and the babel of voices below that went on half the night because of Ramazan, and a continuous itching which must be credited to some kind of insect, I fell asleep in an hour or two from sheer fag and did not wake until six o’clock next morning, when I was surprised to find from the comparative freshness of the air that the smell overnight must have been chiefly the fumes from below filtering through the chinks in the floor. I discovered the day before that Turkish arrangements for washing are rather awkward. There was a basin-like sink on the landing, with a perforated bottom, and an urn filled with water having a very small-bore tap that let it out in a trickle too slight to fill your sponge. I had to wait my turn in the morning with men occupying the other room. Then, having made myself some cocoa in a small slop-basin, and paid my bill, which was nearly as much as at the Brusa hotel, I was only too thankful to crawl into the wretched talika again and be off. A young Jew, who spoke a little French, had previously informed me that he was going to Brusa that day, and as we drove off the driver called him, and he tumbled in without any leave from me. I now began to find out that the only way to avoid the jar was to lie full length, so I arranged my suit-case at a slope in the carrier at the back, and put my overcoat upon it to rest my head, although at times the jolts were bad enough to make it dance in the air.

When Yeni-Shehir was reached again, the motor-car, although the driver had offered to spend the night there and take me back, had disappeared, and there was nothing for it but to go on the whole way in the same talika. After eating sandwiches in the stable-room off the yard, and being asked mildly if I was a *giaiour*, the same horses were put in again, and I had the modified satisfaction of being told I should get to Bursa

⁶ The reference is to Genesis 23:8–17.

⁷ A narghileh is a hookah.

that night. After another three hours [70] shaking the horses were watered at the half-way village and, no doubt, a second kindly arrangement was made at my expense, as, though all was ready, we didn't start. I asked the Jew why, and he looked uncomfortable and said he didn't know. Then the driver called out "Hassan," and a great strapping soldier came running and scrambled in on top of me. Apparently he expected me to make room to accommodate him, but this was about the limit, and his being a soldier made me all the more angry. I pushed him out, but he tried to force his way in, and evidently though a man in uniform (one of "our noble Turkish heroes") could ride roughshod over anybody. When he saw I was determined he glared murder at me, and I thought I was in trouble, as he was the one and only representative of law and order for twenty miles or so. However, a firm front does wonders in the East, and most Orientals are cowards at bottom, and he contented himself with angrily demanding my passport. This I showed him, and he wanted to take it, but I took care not to let him, but held it in front of his eyes and showed him back and front. I thought I was going to be taken to the Caracol and held up for hours or even for the night, but he thought better of it and I shook him off.

We reached Brusa after dark, but just in time for dinner at the hotel, which now seemed a Paradise, but the waiter told me it would be quite impossible for me to leave the next day, as it was too late to get the police *visa*. Next morning he gave me the further cheering information that, as it was Friday and Ramazan, I shouldn't be able to get it that day and should have to stay till Sunday. I had visions of telegraphing to my licensed Reader, but determined to do everything possible first, and found that if I sent to the house of the Chief of Police in the afternoon he might be persuaded to do what was necessary. This was right out of the town, and it took a man four or five hours to get it, but the thing was done, and at 7:30 next morning I was in the Mudania train and reached Constantinople on Saturday afternoon, so that the Church was not deprived of its full services after all.

I have not yet been able to get an expert to date the epitaphion, but the groundwork is crimson and the embroidery mostly silver, and it has been suggested that it is Cretan workmanship. The inscription puzzled me, but when I realised that it was wrongly spelt the difficulty vanished, so I give it as it stands, and those who know the living pronunciation of Greek will not rank it with cross-word puzzles.

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΣ ΠΡΟΚΗΝΗΤΑΤΑΛΙΑ ΠΡΟΚΗΝΗΤΙ
ΑΠΟ ΤΟΛΑΚΙΜΝΗCΘΗΚΗ ΠΙΕ⁸

R. F. Borough.
*Chaplain, Crimean Memorial Church,
Constantinople.*

⁸ As explained in Chapter 4, this inscription translates as "Remember, Lord, the worshipper Demetrios and the worshipper Atalia, apostles." The spelling is typical of late-Byzantine and post-Byzantine inscriptions and, as Borough noted, the spelling reflects Modern Greek pronunciation. The inscription alone, however, is not helpful for dating the epitaphios unless Demetrios and Atalia can be identified. Otherwise, guesses about the date of the Nicaea/Canterbury Epitaphios (figures 137–138) must rely upon comparisons of the composition, style, and technique to examples that have secure dates, as discussed in Chapter 3.

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Illustrations

For practical reasons I have arranged all the illustrations of the catalogue entries together as figures 1 through 82. The other figures appear in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.



Figure 1. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked ca. 1900 before it disappeared. It disappeared probably during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913).



Figure 2. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked in 1995 by which time it had resurfaced in Sophia, Bulgaria. The kalymma that had been used to repair the lower left corner had been removed.



Figure 3. Catalogue Number 1: The Aër-Epitaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos as it looked in 2004 at the exhibition Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557) in New York.

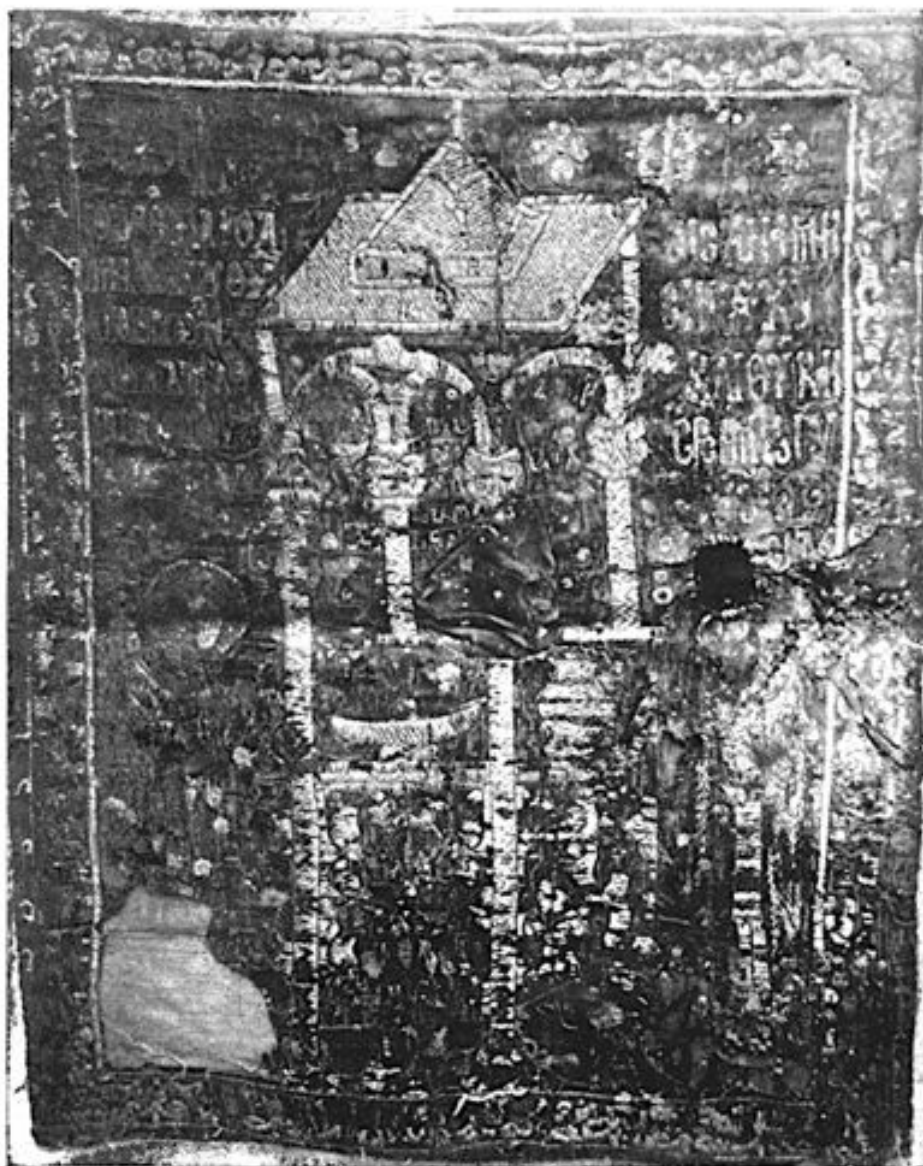


Figure 4. The kalymma that had been used to repair the lower left corner of the Aër-Epithaphios of Andronikos Palaiologos.



Figure 5. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epithafios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin.



Figure 6. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epithaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Detail of the head of Christ.



Figure 7. Catalogue Number 2: The Aër-Epithaphios of Stefan Uroš II Milutin. Detail of the lower part of the composition with the inscription.



Figure 8. Catalogue Number 3. The Aër-Epithafios of Michael Kyprianos. The Art Museum of Princeton University.

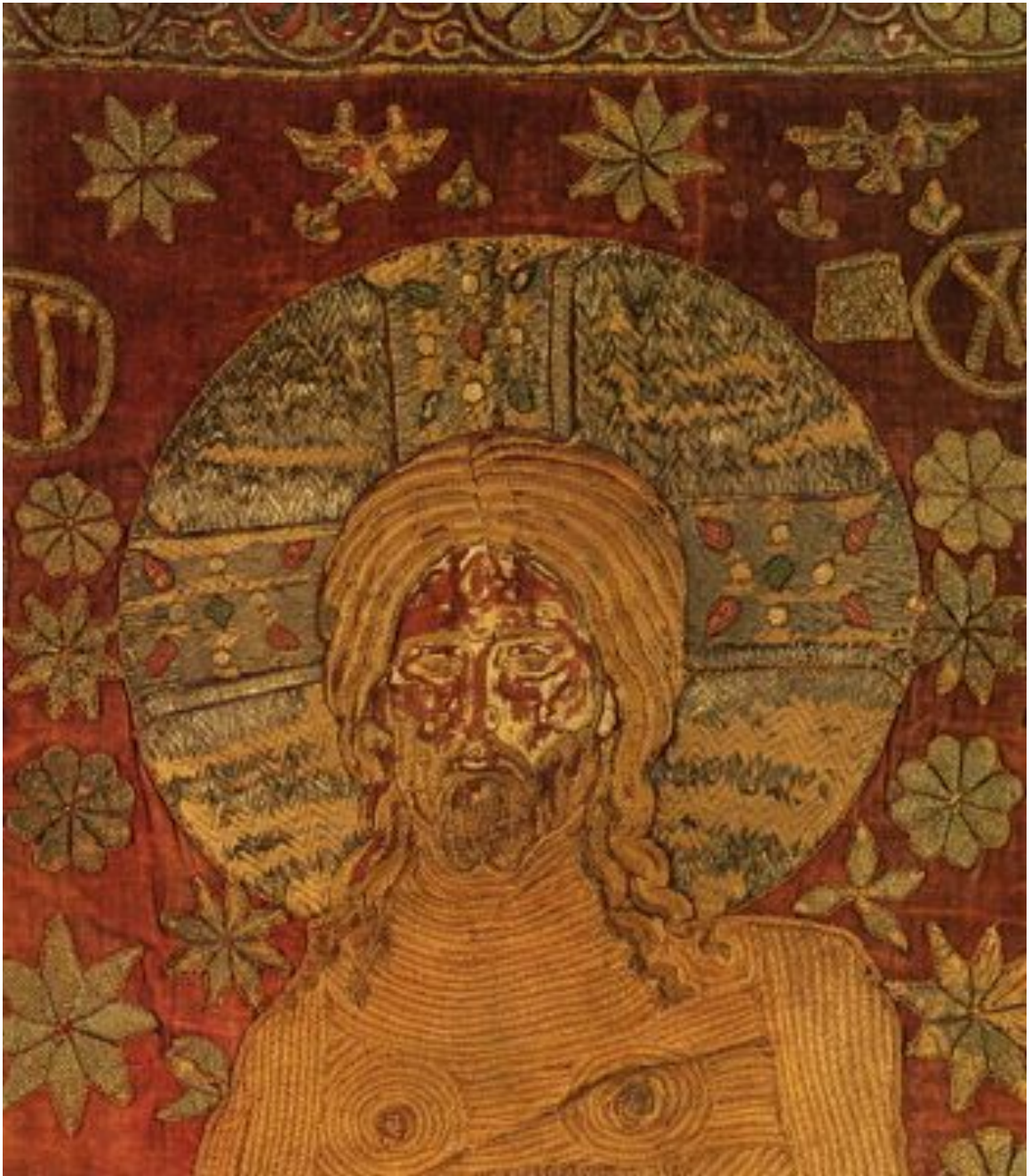


Figure 9. Catalogue Number 3. The Aër-Epitaphios of Michael Kyprianos. Detail of the head of Christ.

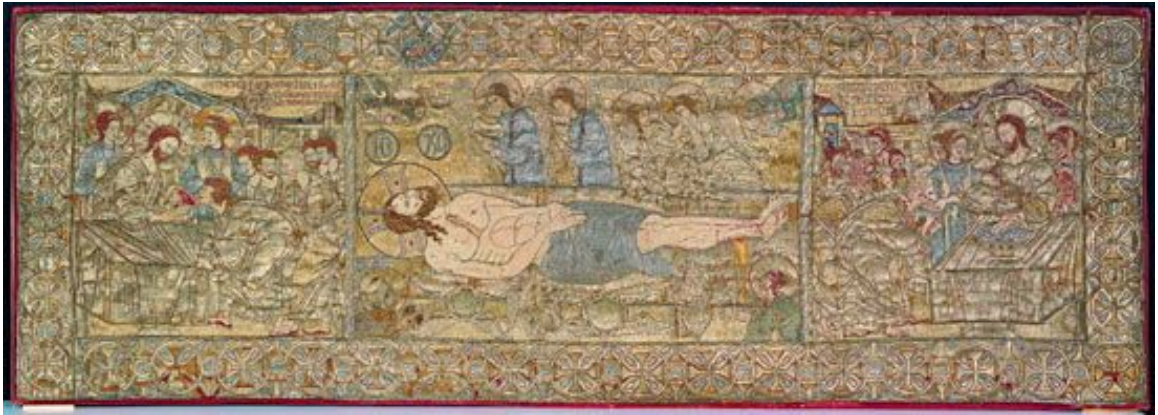


Figure 10. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios.



Figure 11. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail of the left panel.



Figure 12. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail of the right panel.

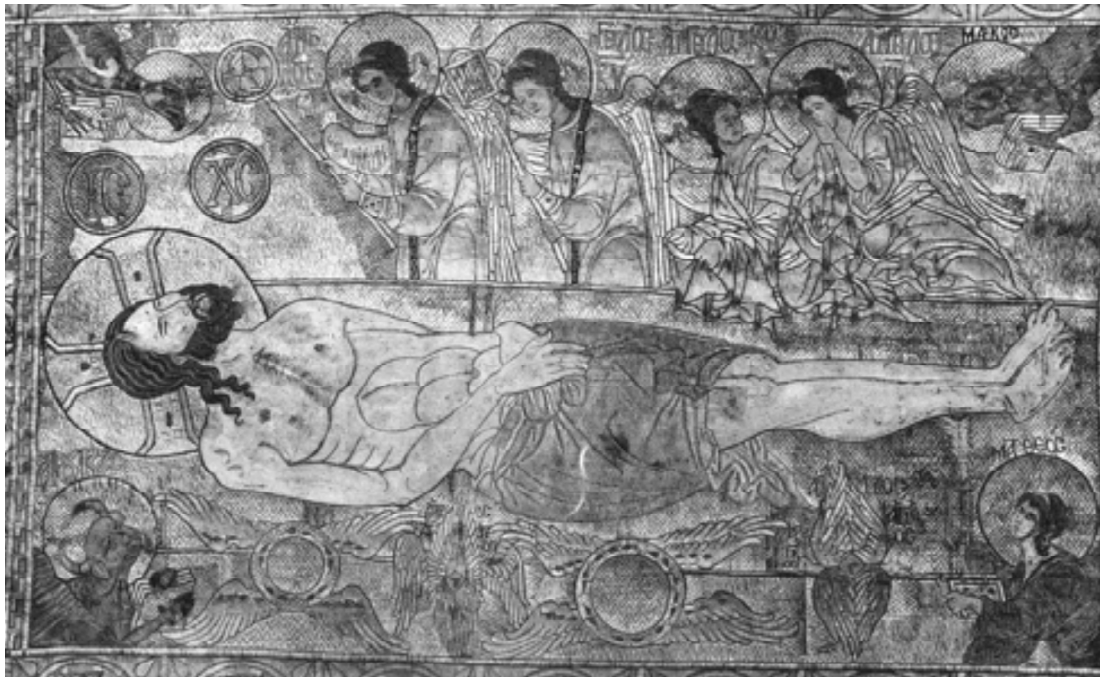


Figure 13. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail—the center panel



Figure 14. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the deacon-angels in the center panel.



Figure 15. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the lamenting angels in the center panel.



Figure 16. Catalogue Number 5. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Agios Athanasios.



Figure 17. Catalogue Number 6. The Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (Chilandar 1), black and white.



Figure 18. Catalogue Number 6. The Aër-Epitaphios of John of Skopje (Chilandar 1), color.



Figure 19. Catalogue Number 7. The Aër-Epithafios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos.



Figure 20. Catalogue Number 7. The Aër-Epithafios of the Emperor John Kantakouzenos. Detail showing the inscription at Christ's feet and the Vatopedi monogram in the border.



Figure 21. Catalogue Number 8. The Aër-Epitaphios at the Pantokrator Monastery.



Figure 22. Catalogue Number 9. The Aër-Epitaphios at the Holy Monastery of the Metamorphosis.



Figure 23. Catalogue Number 10. The Aër-Epithafios at the Stavronikita Monastery.



Figure 24. Catalogue Number 11. The Aër-Epithafios from the Bachkovo Monastery.



Figure 25. Catalogue Number 12. The San Marco Aër-Epitaphios.

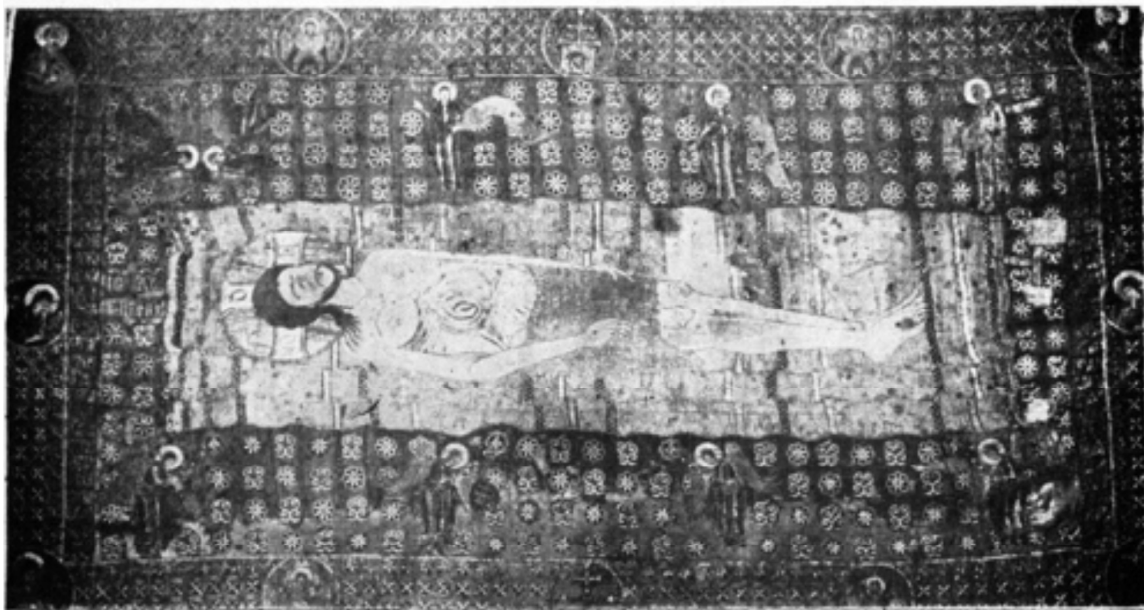


Figure 26. Catalogue Number 13. The Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites from Glavenica and Berat, Albania, black and white.

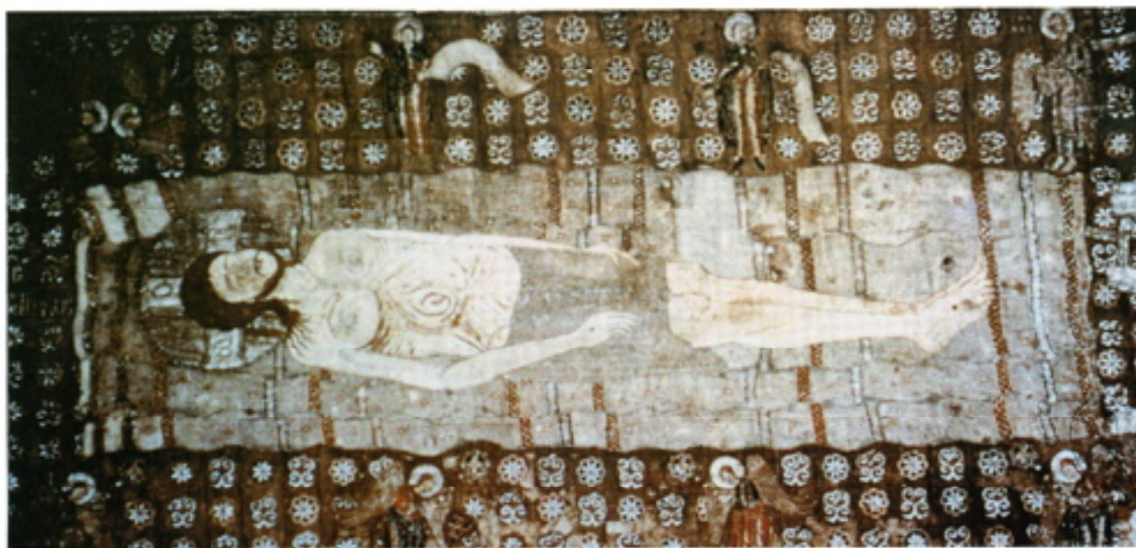


Figure 27. Catalogue Number 13. The Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites, color.



Figure 28. Catalogue Number 13. Albanian postage stamps with the Aër-Epitaphios of Georgios Arianites.



Figure 29. Catalogue Number 14. The Aër of the Grand Princess Semenovia.



Figure 30. Catalogue Number 15. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Cozia Monastery, Wallachia.



Figure 31. Catalogue Number 15. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Cozia Monastery, detail showing the deacon-angel on the right holding a rhipidion and the pastoral staff held by the next deacon-angel to the right.



Figure 32. Catalogue Number 16a. The “umbrella” of the Veronica Ciborium from Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. Lat. 8494, f. 130.

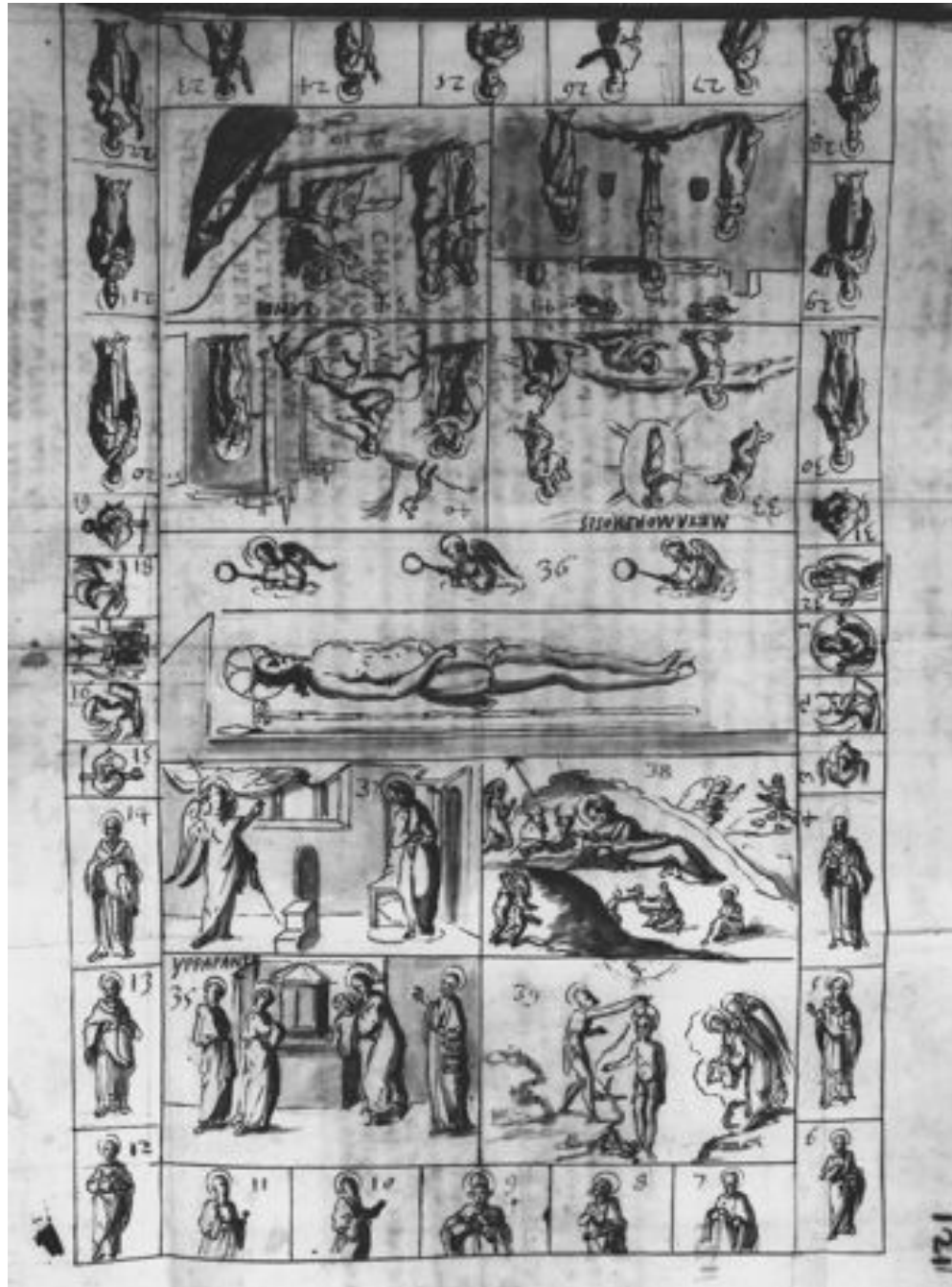


Figure 33. Catalogue Number 16a. The “umbrella” of the Veronica Ciburium from Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan Cod. Ambros. A168 inf., f. 121r.



Figure 34. Catalogue Number 16b. The Vatican Aër-Epitaphios as illustrated in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Arch. S. Pietro H. 3.

Exemplum supradictae umbellae sacrosancti
Sudarii Veronicae in ueteri Vaticana Basilica



Κύριε σπυρί μου ἐξόδιον ὕμνον καὶ ἐκπύριον ἄδην
 σὺ ἄσπερον τῷ τῇ παρῆσιν αἰσίου τῆς ἐσόδου διαπύρου
 π.χ. βασιλεὺς πάντων καὶ ἄλλω πάντων σπυρί.



Figure 36. Catalogue Number 17. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ephemia and Eupraxia.



Figure 37. Catalogue Number 18. The Aër-Epitaphios of Antonios Heracleia.



Figure 38. Catalogue Number 19. The Aër-Epithafios of John and Syropoulos (Chilandar 2).



Figure 39. Catalogue Number 20. The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I, from the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery as it looked with the surviving parts of the original mounted on a light-colored, patterned backing cloth.



Figure 40. Catalogue Number 20. The Aër-Epitaphios of Grand Prince Basil I, from the Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery, as it looks now.



Figure 41. Catalogue Number 21. The Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes.

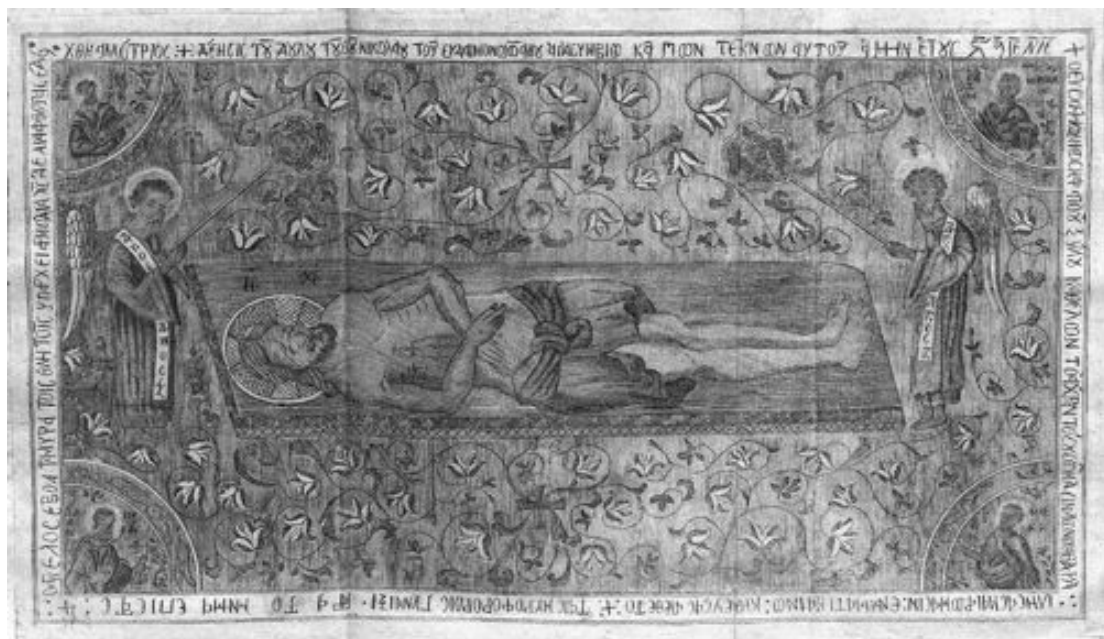


Figure 42. Catalogue Number 21. The Aër-Epitaphios of Nikolas Eudaimonoioannes, engraving from Cajetanus M. Capycius [Gaetano Maria Capece], *De vestusto altaris pallio ecclesiae graecae christianorum ex cimeliarchio clericorum regularium theatinorum domus SS. Apoltolorum Neapolis: Diatriba*. Naples: Valentinus Azzolinus, 1756. Accordion-fold engraving between pages 8 and 9.



Figure 43. Catalogue Number 22. The Aër-Epithafios from the St. Sergius Lavra of the Holy Trinity, Zagorsk.



Figure 44. Catalogue Number 23. The Aër-Epithafios of the Metropolitan Photios.



Figure 45. Catalogue Number 24. An Aër-Epitaphios from Novgorod (Novgorod 12).



Figure 46. Catalogue Number 25. The Great Aër from the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady in Suzdal.



Figure 47. Catalogue Number 26. The Aër-Epithaphios of the Metropolitan Makarios, from the Żółkiew Monastery.



Figure 48. Catalogue Number 27. The Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina.

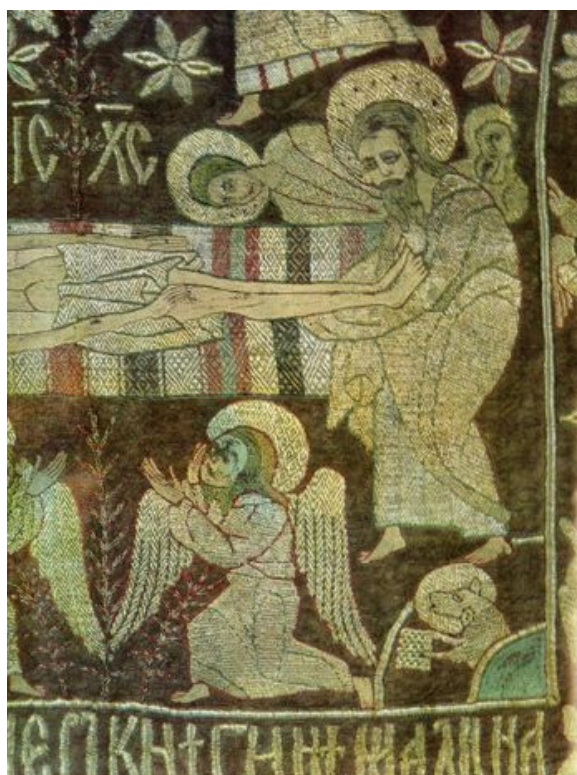


Figure 49. Catalogue Number 27. The Aër-Epitaphios of Princess Malina, detail of the lower right quarter.



Figure 50. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery.



Figure 51. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Neamț Monastery, detail of the left side showing the Virgin and Christ's head.



Figure 52. Catalogue Number 28. The Aër-Epithafios from the Neamț Monastery, detail of the right side showing Mary Magdalene.

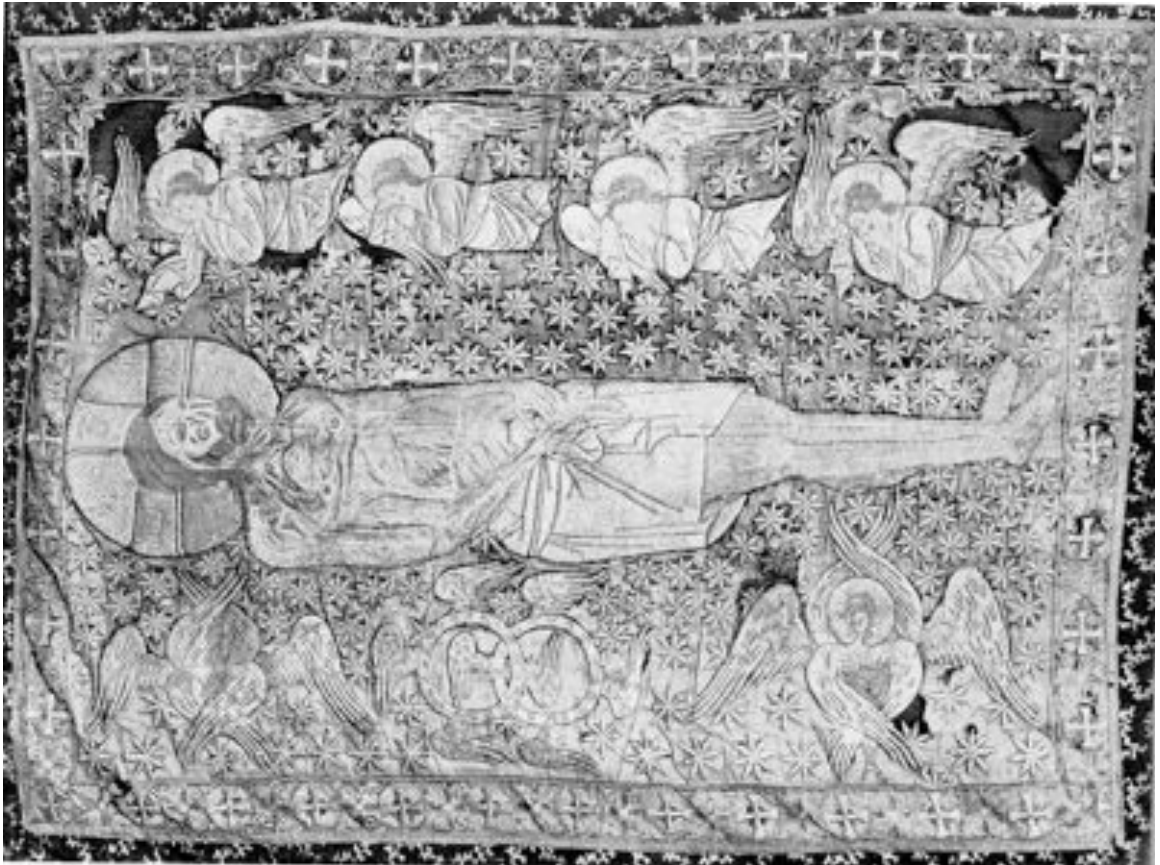


Figure 53. Catalogue Number 29. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Church of St. Nicholas of Rădăuți.

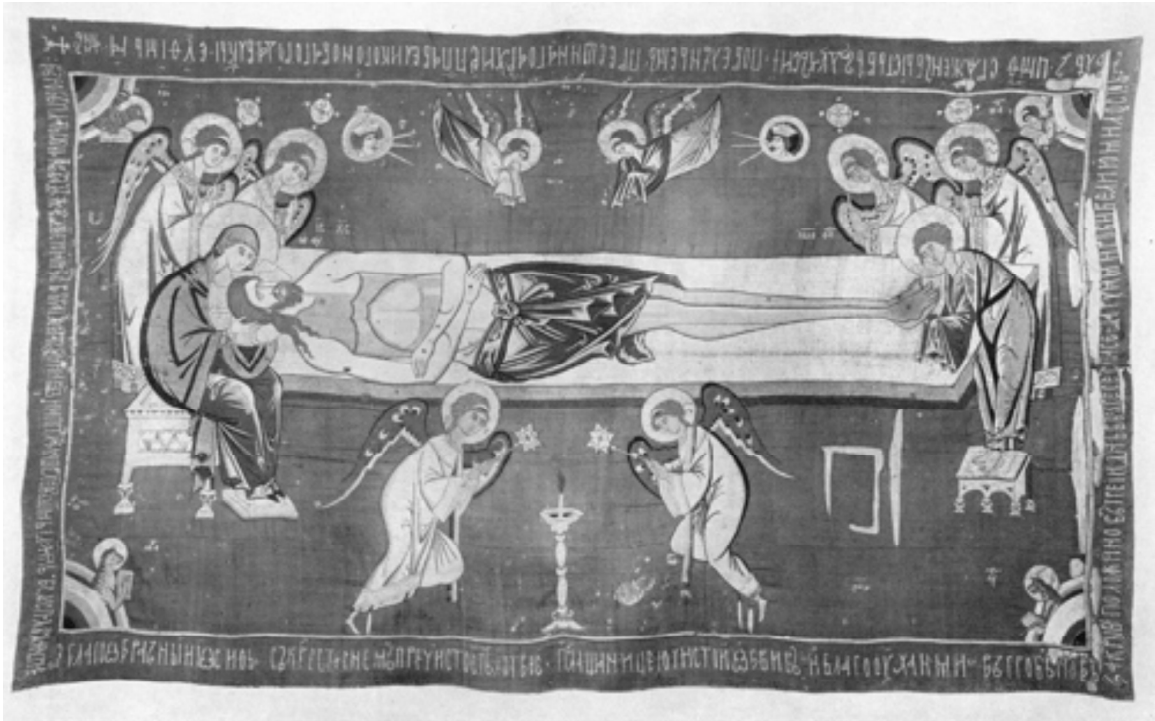


Figure 54. Catalogue Number 30. The Aër-Epithafios of the Archbishop Euphemios, from the Monastery of Puchezhsk.



Figure 55. Catalogue Number 31. The Aër-Epithafios from the Khutinsk Monastery.



Figure 56. Catalogue Number 32. The Aër-Epitaphios of King George VIII.



Figure 57. Catalogue Number 33. The Aër-Epitaphios of Prince Dmitrii Shemiaka.



Figure 58. Catalogue Number 34. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Church of Saint Sophia, Novgorod.

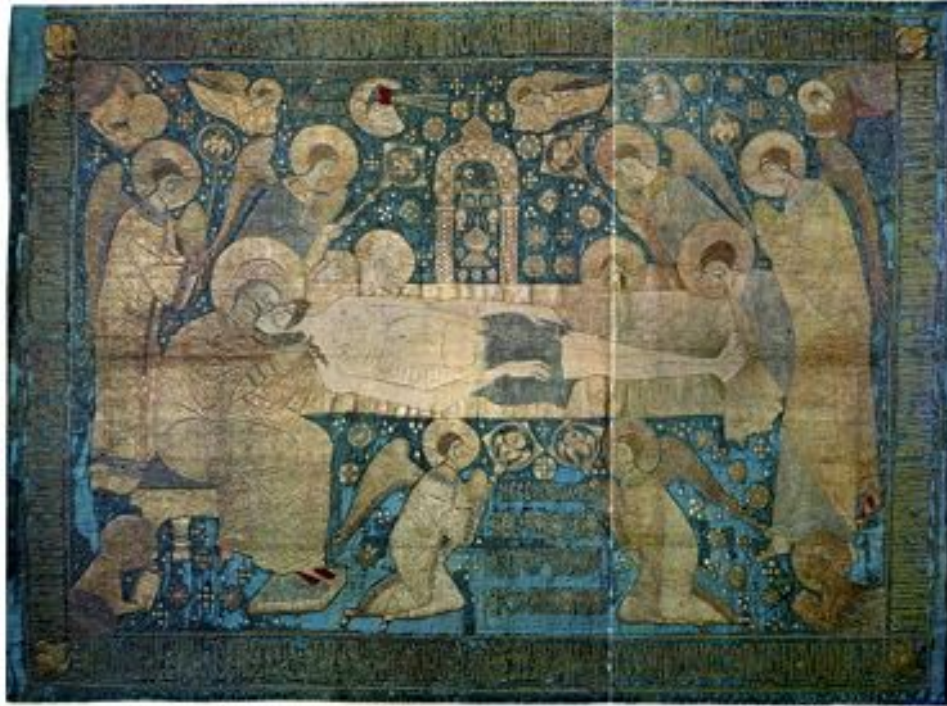


Figure 59. Catalogue Number 35. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum.



Figure 60. Catalogue Number 35. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Stieglitz Museum, detail showing Joseph of Arimathea.



Figure 61. Catalogue Number 37. The Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin.

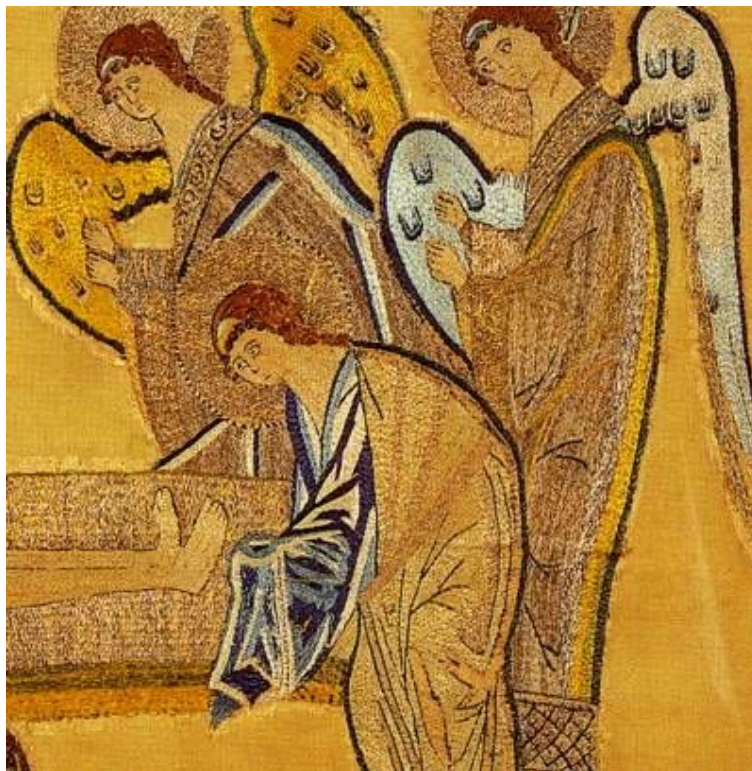


Figure 62. Catalogue Number 37. Detail of the right side of the Aër-Epitaphios from Tikhvin.



Figure 63. Catalogue Number 38 (Patmos 1). Aër-Epithafios from the Patmos Monastery.



Figure 64. Catalogue Number 39 (Patmos 2). Aër-Epithafios from the Patmos Monastery.

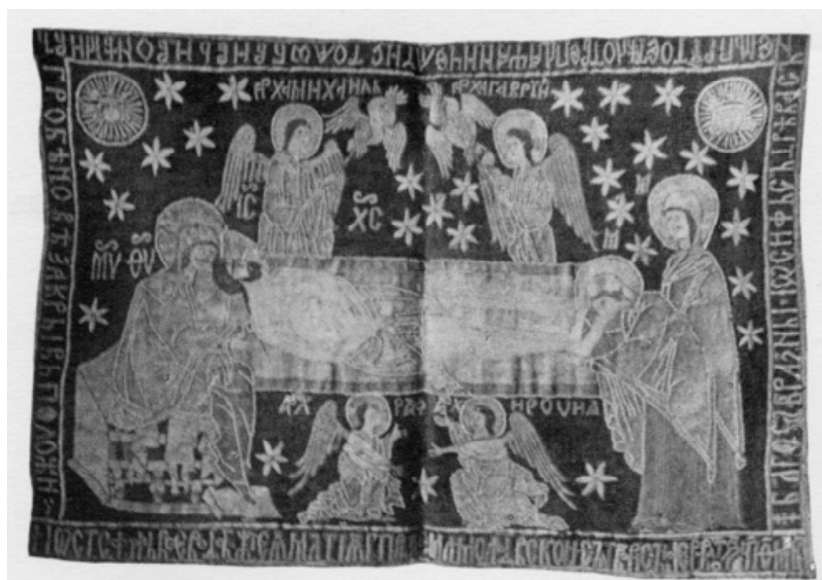


Figure 65. Catalogue number 41. The Putna Aër (Tafrali 65). Erroneously illustrated as “85” in Oreste Tafrali’s *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925), figure 85.



Figure 66. Catalogue number 42. Aër-Epitaphios from Vatra-Moldoviței.



Figure 67. Catalogue number 43. The Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan.

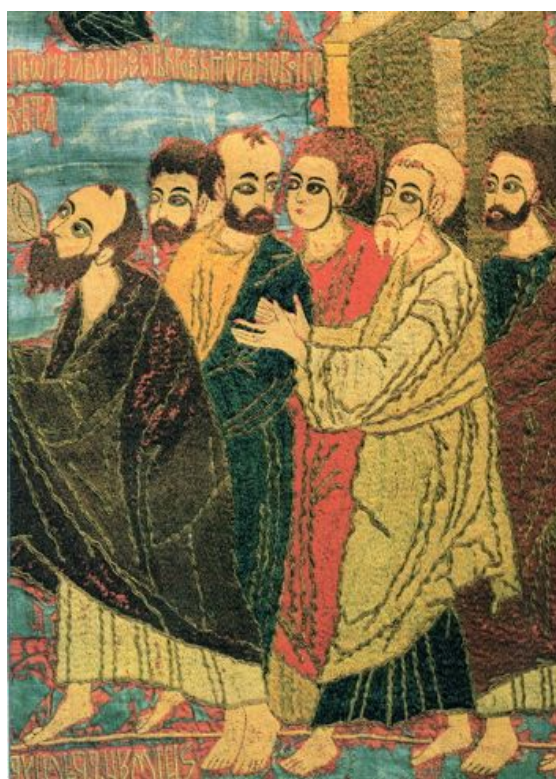


Figure 68. Catalogue number 43. The Aër of the Church of the Dormition at Pereiaslavl-Riazan, detail of the right side.

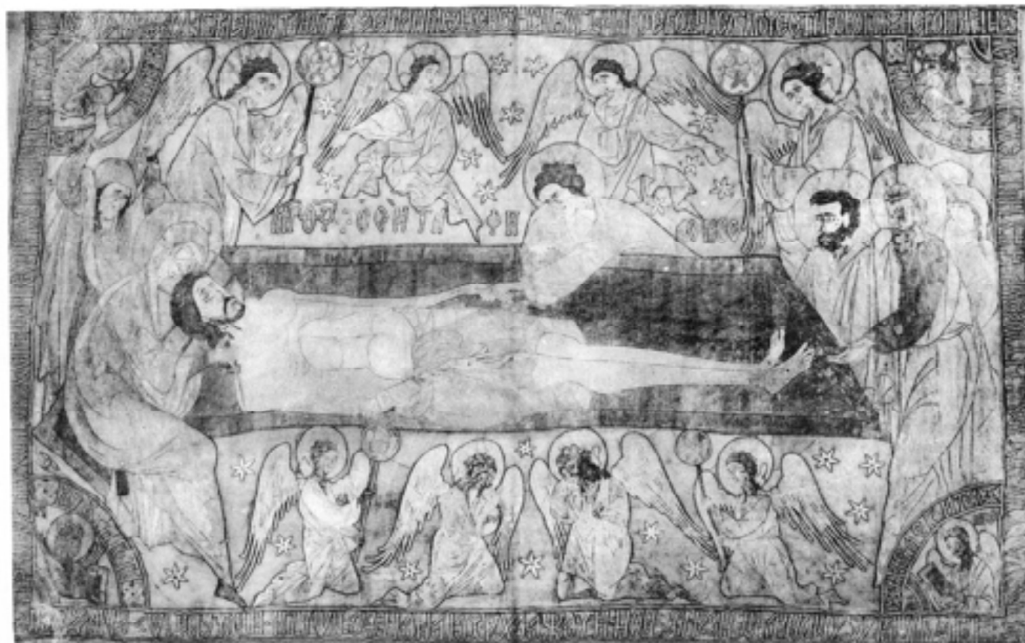


Figure 69. Catalogue number 44. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery.



Figure 70. Catalogue number 44. The Aër-Epitaphios of Ștefan cel Mare from the Putna Monastery, detail in color showing the different couching patterns in the halos of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.



Figure 71. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery.



Figure 72. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the face of the figure standing behind the Virgin.



Figure 73. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaфios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the group of angels in the zone above Christ.



Figure 74. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaфios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the group of angels in the zone below Christ.



Figure 75. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the name “ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΑ” (Alexander) in the upper left corner of the border inscription.



Figure 76. Catalogue number 45. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Moldovița Monastery, detail showing the date in the upper right corner of the border inscription.



Figure 77. Catalogue number 46. An Aër-Epithafios of the Novgorod School in the State Historical Museum, Moscow.



Figure 78. Catalogue number 47. The Aër-Epitaphios of Manuel Ambaratopoulos.



Figure 79. Catalogue number 48. The Aër-Epitaphios in the Schloss Autenried Icon Museum, Ichenhausen, Germany.



Figure 80. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epitaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery.



Figure 81. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery, detail showing the landscape in the zone below Christ.



Figure 82. Catalogue number 49. The Aër-Epithaphios from the Dobrovăț Monastery, detail showing the faces of the figures at Christ's feet.



Figure 83. Painted Epitaphios. 170 x 120 cm. Dečani Monastery, Kosovo. Sixteenth Century?

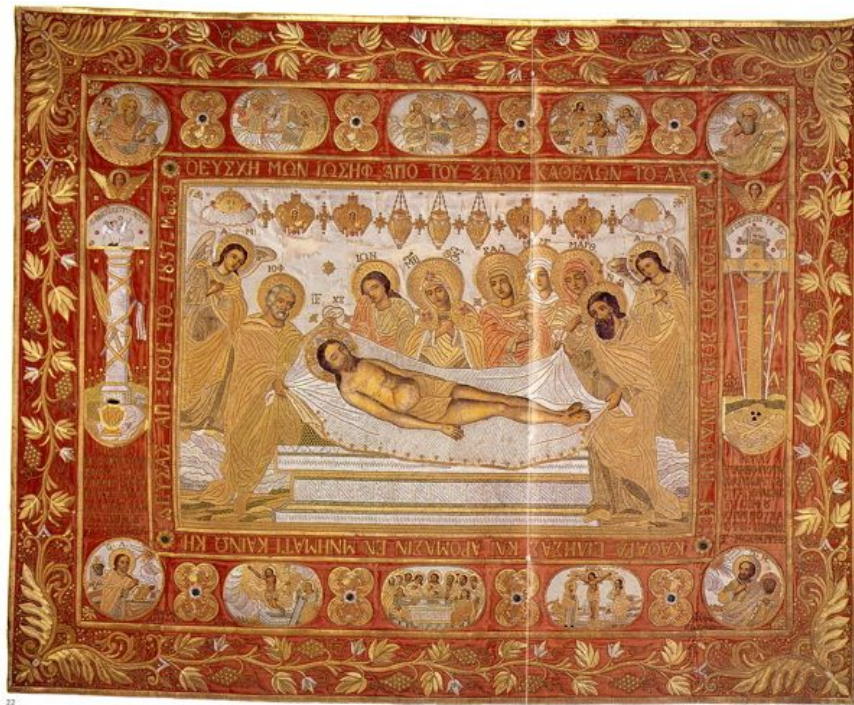


Figure 84. Painted and embroidered epitaphios made in the area of Butoi, Romania. 136 x 110. Monastery of St. Stephen, Meteora, Greece. 1857.



Figure 85. The Antimension of Bishop George Gennadius Bizancij. From the Episcopal and Heritage Institute Libraries of the Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Passaic, New Jersey. 33.8 x 41.2. 1718.



Figure 86. Antimimension. 45 x 58.5. Stavronikita, Mount Athos. 1717.

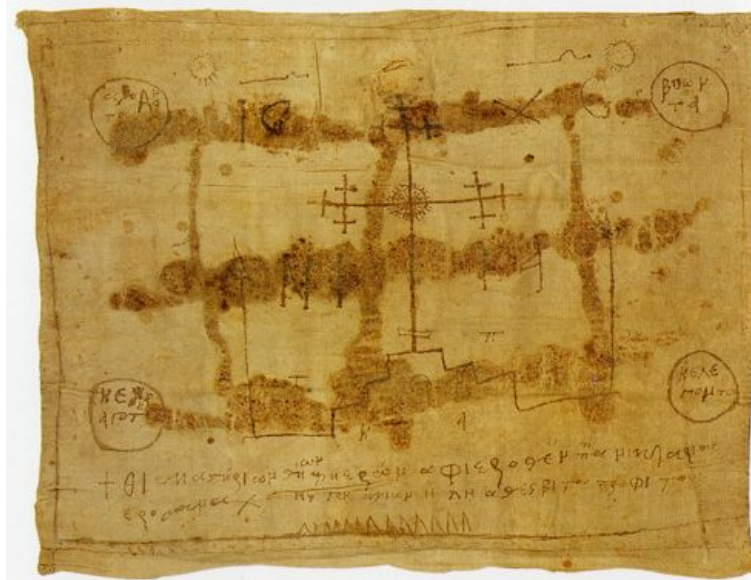


Figure 87. Antimimension. 42 x 54.5. Simonopetra, Mount Athos. Sixteenth Century.



Figure 88. The front of The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17.



Figure 89. The back of The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17.



Figure 90. The Major Sakkos of the Metropolitan Photios. Kremlin Armory, Moscow. 1414–17. Detail of the front showing the portrait of the Metropolitan Photios.

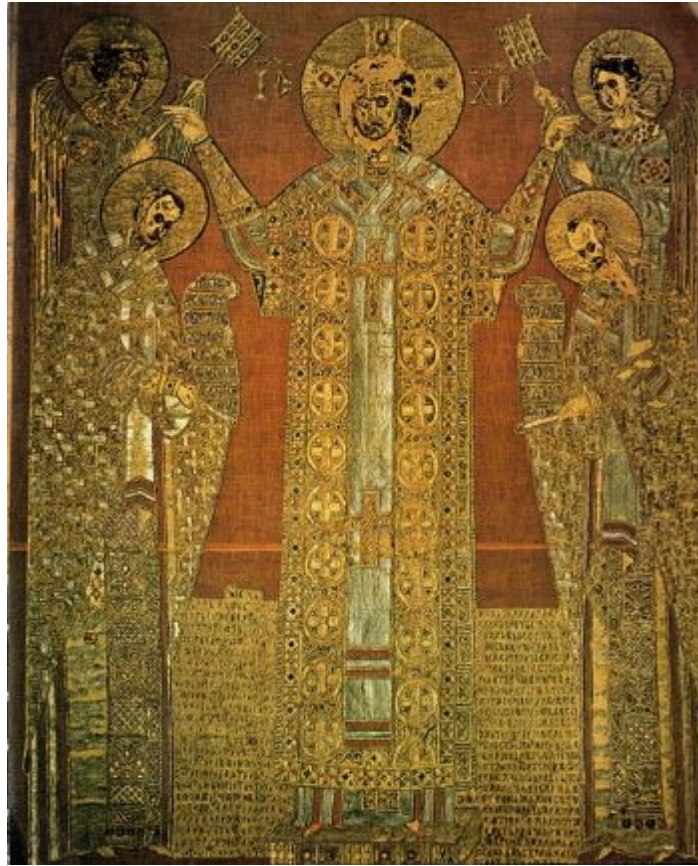


Figure 91. The Nun Jefimija. Katapetasma for the Royal Doors of the Chilandar Monastery Katholikon, Mount Athos. 118 x 144 cm. 1399.



Figure 92. Kalymma. 71 x 76. Benaki Museum (Benaki 9371). 1664.

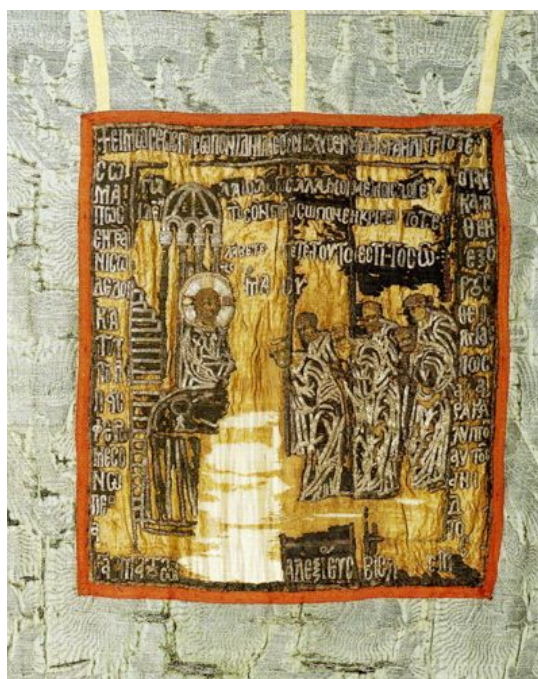


Figure 93. Diskokalymma. Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany (88). 1185–95.



Figure 94. Poterokalymma. Cathedral Treasury, Halberstadt, Germany (87). 1185–95.



Figure 95. Silver Paten from Riha. Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, DC. Sixth Century.



Figure 96. Epitaphios from Wallachia. 70 x 54.5 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.



Figure 97. Epitaphios from Wallachia as it looked ca. 1972 before conservation. 81.3 x 66 cm (including the cloth on which the epitaphios was mounted). Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.



Figure 98. Detail of an Epitaphios from Wallachia showing metal-wrapped thread couched over a coarse cord. 700 x 540 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.



Figure 99. Epitaphios from Wallachia. Detail showing metal-wrapped silk thread. 700 x 540 cm. Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington. 1534/5.



Figure 100. Poterokalymma showing the Virgin (Meter Theou) and Christ. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.



Figure 101. Diskokalymma showing the Melismos. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.



Figure 102. Aër showing the figure of Christ as Amnos. Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery, Iaroslavl, Russia. Seventeenth Century.



Figure 103. Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the nave in the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now Saint Kliment), Ohrid. 1295.



Figure 104. Epitaphios. 76 x 50 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens. (Benaki 33726). 1776.



Figure 105. The Aër-Epitaphios carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession in the Divine Liturgy. Eighteenth-century fresco painted by George Markou at the Holy Monastery of Kaisariane, Athens.



Figure 106. Angels with kalymmata and an aër at the front of the Great Entrance procession in the Divine Liturgy. Eighteenth-century fresco painted by George Markou at the Holy Monastery of Kaisariane, Athens.

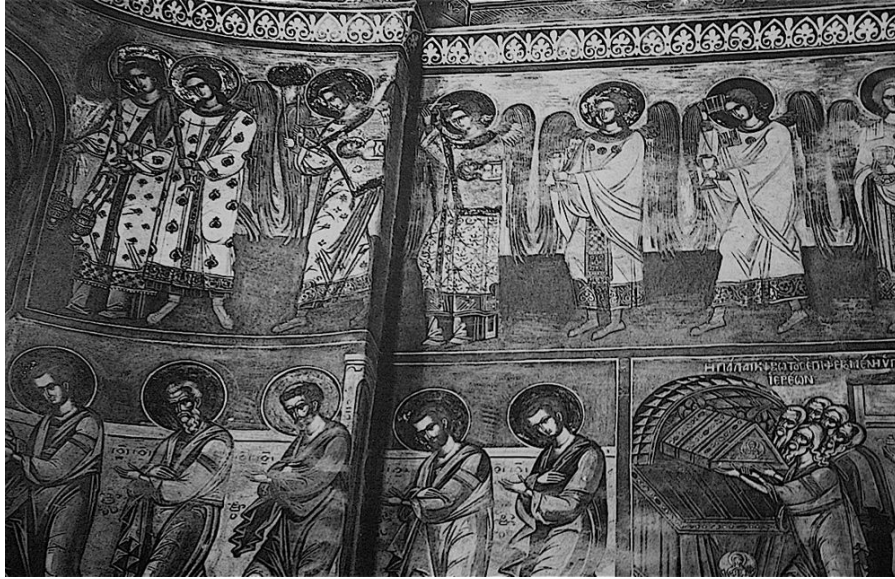


Figure 107. The front of the Great Entrance procession from the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos. Ca. 1568. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 219.3.

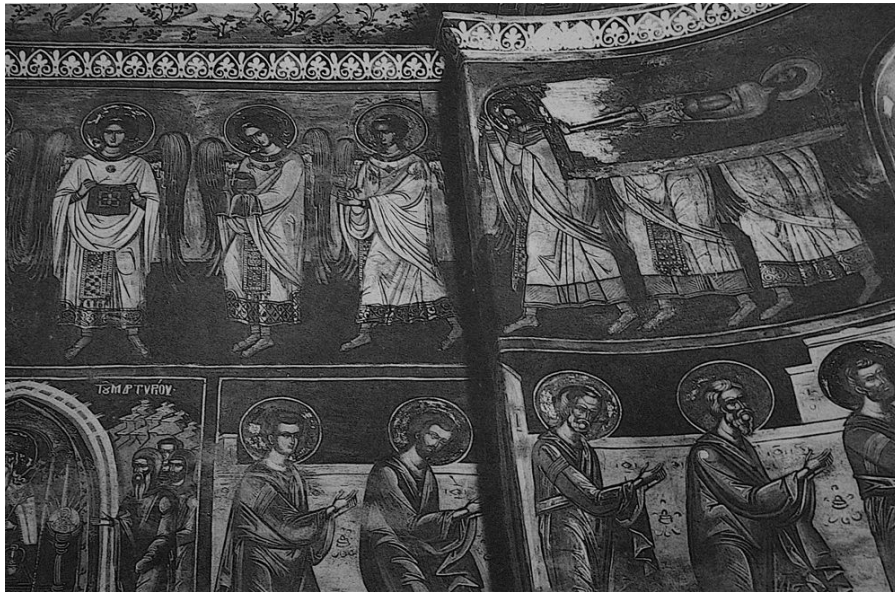


Figure 108. The aër carried at the end of the Great Entrance procession from the painting of the Divine Liturgy in the apse at Dochiariou, Mount Athos. Ca. 1568. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 218.2.



Figure 109. Wall painting of 1560 on the South wall of the bema in the Saint Nicholas church at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos showing the leading figures of the Great Entrance.

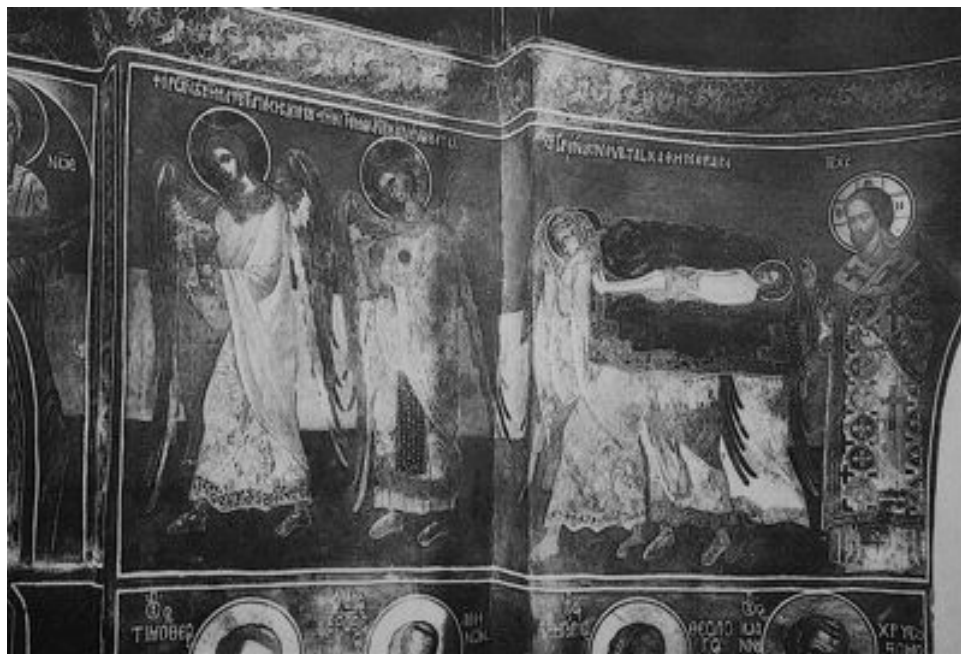


Figure 110. Wall painting of 1560 on the North wall of the bema in the Saint Nicholas church at the Great Lavra, Mount Athos showing the figures carrying the great aër in Great Entrance.



Figure 111. Divine Liturgy in the dome of the Chilandar Katholikon. Thirteenth Century or Fourteenth Century. From Gabriel Millet's *Les Peintures*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de l'Athos relevés avec le concours de l'Armée Française d'Orient et de l'École Française d'Athènes* (Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1927), Plate 64.1.

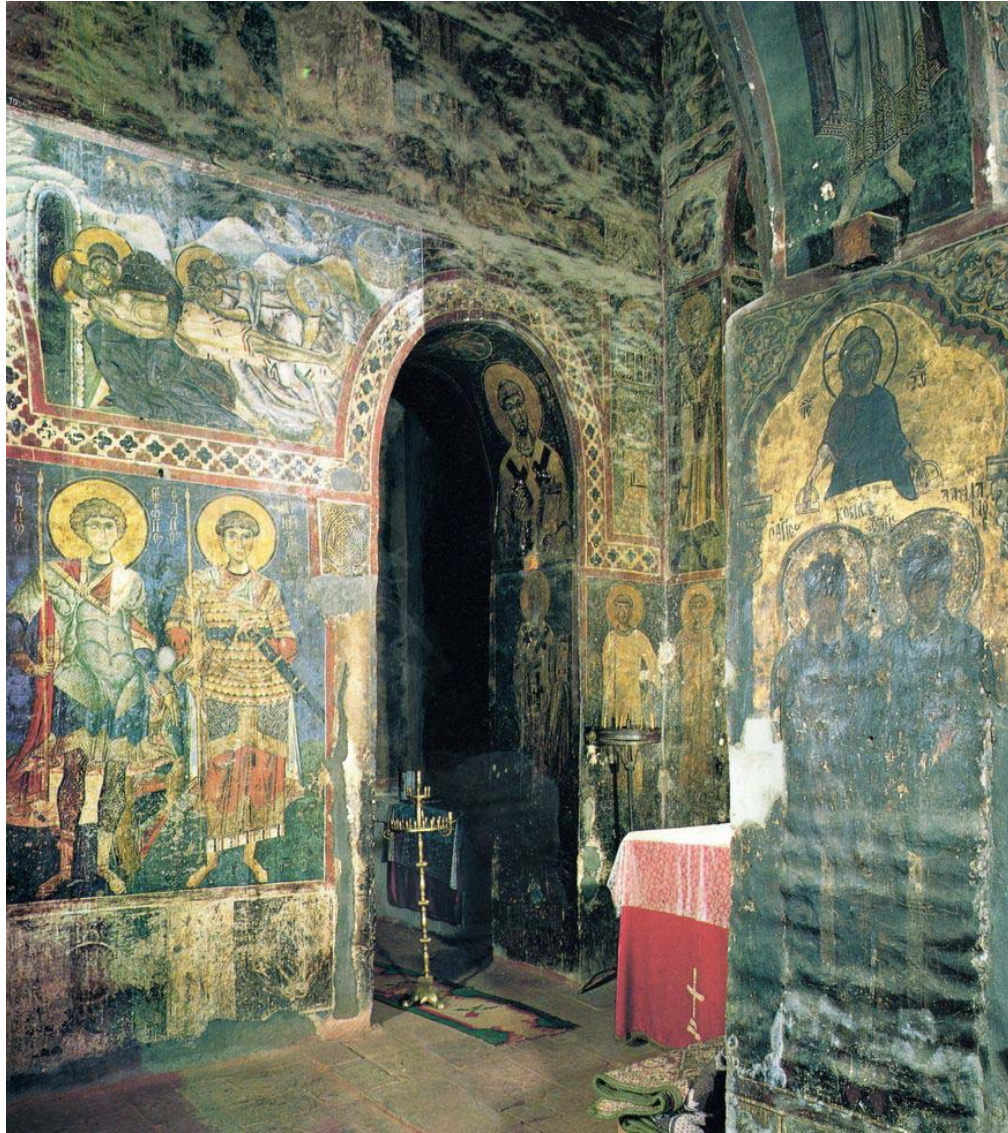


Figure 112. Wall paintings on the north wall of the naos in Hagioi Anargyroi, Kastoria, Greece. The Entombment can be seen in the center of the north wall. Ca. 1100.



Figure 113. Wall painting of the Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the naos in St. Pantalaïmon, Nerezi. 1164.



Figure 114. The Melismos in the north apse of the Markov Monastery, Serbia. Fourteenth Century.



Figure 115. The Melismos at the Church of St. George, Kurbinovo. Late Twelfth Century.



Figure 116. The Melismos in the Church of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki. Early Fourteenth Century.



Figure 117. Melismos Aër. 68 x 60 cm. Benaki Museum, Athens. Late Sixteenth Century.

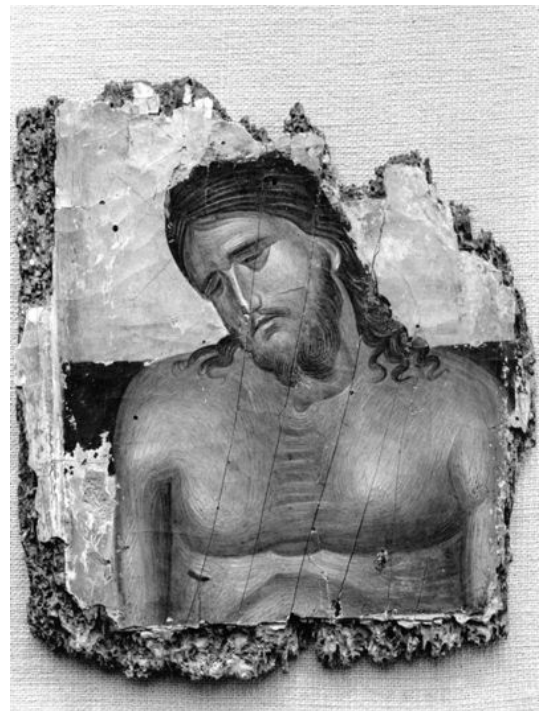


Figure 118. Diptych of the Lamenting Virgin (left) and the Akra Tapeinosis (right). From the Monastery of the Transfiguration, Meteora, Greece. Late Fourteenth Century?

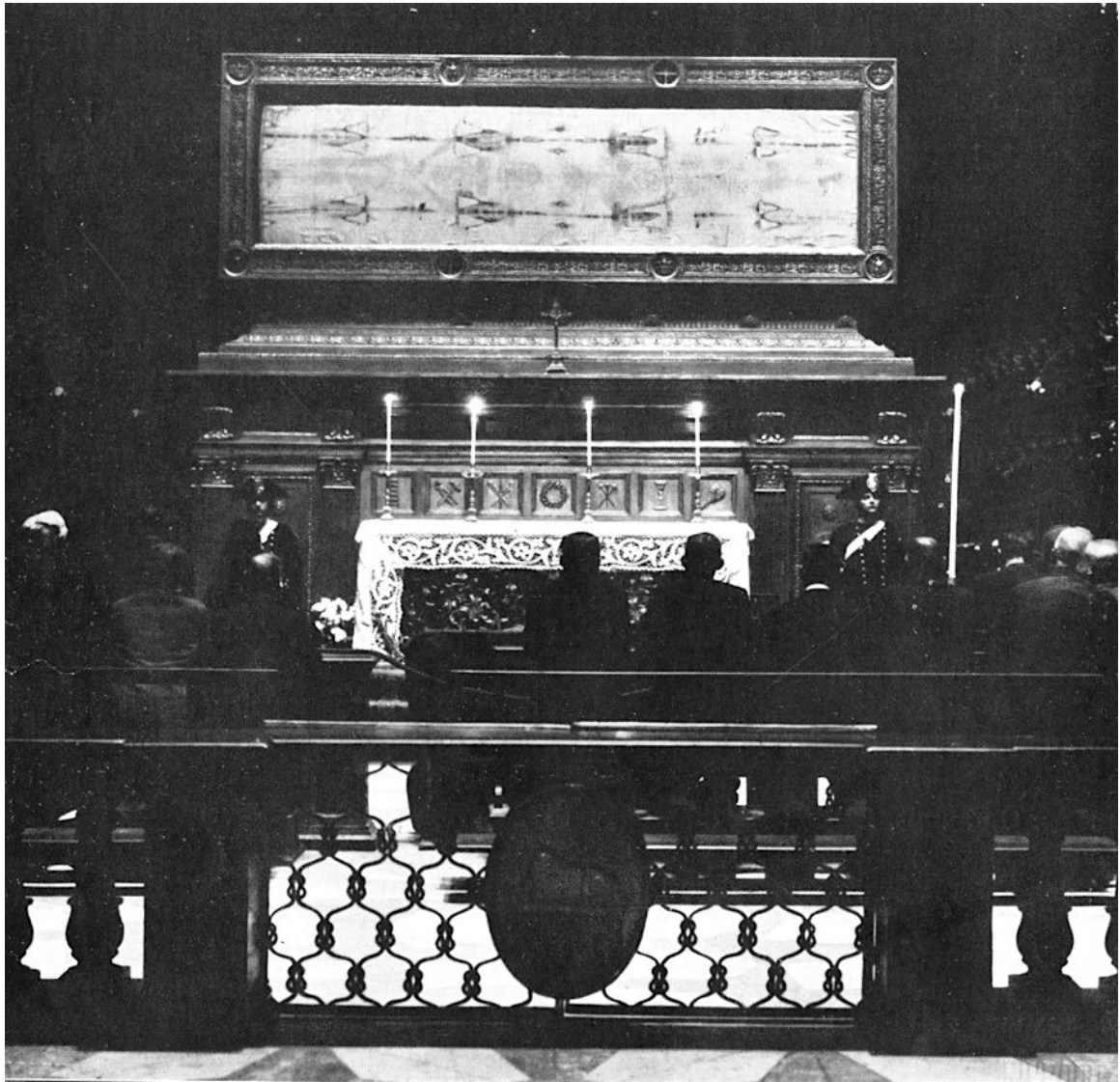


Figure 119. Ostension of the Turin Shroud in 1931. From Paul Vignon's *Le saint suaire de Turin, devant la science, l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'iconographie, la logique*, (Paris: Masson, 1938). Photograph on page 10.

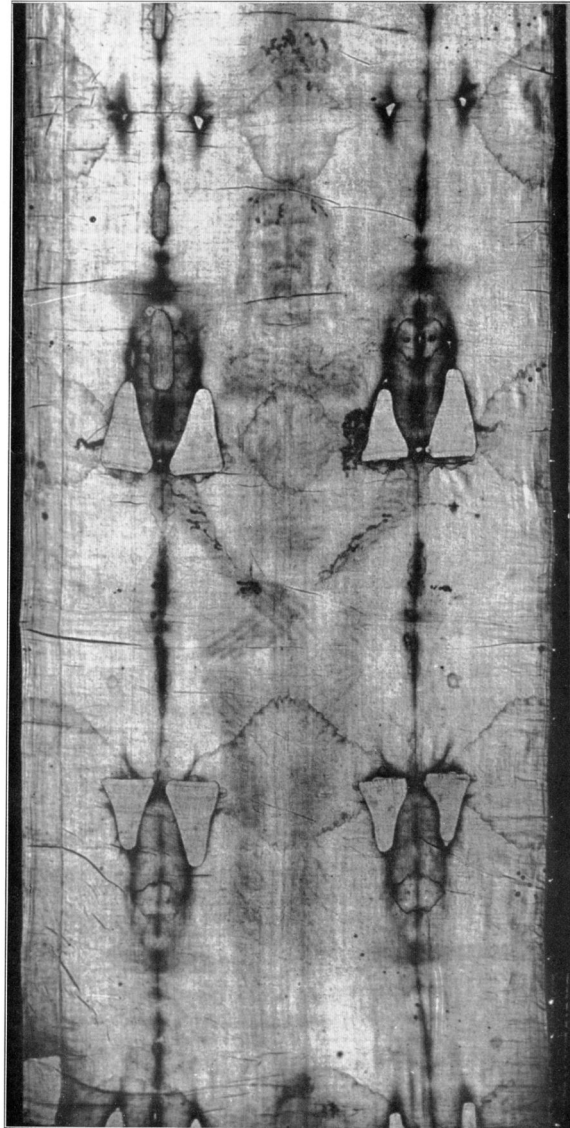


Figure 120. Turin Shroud. Half of the shroud showing the front of the figure. From Paul Vignon's *Le saint suaire de Turin, devant la science, l'archéologie, l'histoire, l'iconographie, la logique*, (Paris: Masson, 1938). Photograph on plate II.



Figure 121. Composite Reliquary at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Figure 122. Detail of the composite reliquary showing a twelfth-century enamel. From the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Figure 123. Wall paintings in the sanctuary of St. Nicholas Orphanos, Thessaloniki showing the Mandylion above the apse. The Melismos is visible between the concelebrating bishops. Ca. 1310–20.



Figure 124. Field Banner of the Bulgarian army during World War I. The banner is decorated with the image of the Mandylion. From Hans Belting's *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Edmund Jephcott, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), page 219, figure 132.



Figure 125. Christ lying on a shroud. Wall painting in the apse of the Church of Zoodochos Pege, Samari, Messenia, Greece. Late Twelfth Century.



Figure 126. Epitaphios or Antimension from Asia Minor. 54 x 30 cm. Benaki Museum (34680). Sixteenth Century.



Figure 127. Aër-Epitaphios of Petru Rareș at the Dionysiou Monastery. 1545.



Figure 128. “Η Απόκαθήλωσις” (The Deposition) and “Ο Ἐπιτάφιος Θρήνος” (The Lamentation) from the north wall (facing south), just south of the north conch, among the 1568 cycle of wall paintings in the Katholikon of Dochiariou, Mount Athos.



Figure 129. “Ο Ἐνταφιασμός” (The Entombment) from the west wall (facing east) of the north conch, among the 1568 cycle of wall paintings in the Katholikon of Dochiariou, Mount Athos.



Figure 130. Epitaphios Threnos on the north wall of the nave in the Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș, Wallachia. Fourteenth Century.



Figure 131. Epitaphios Threnos and Entombment on the north wall of the nave in the Church of Saint Nicholas at Curtea de Argeș, Wallachia. Fourteenth Century.



Figure 132. Epitaphios of Șerban Cantacuzino from the Cotroceni Monastery, with both the Deposition and the Epitaphios Threnos. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. 1679/80.



Figure 133. Epitaphios from the Troize-Sergii Monastery. 276 x 174 cm. Zagorsk Museum. 1560/1.

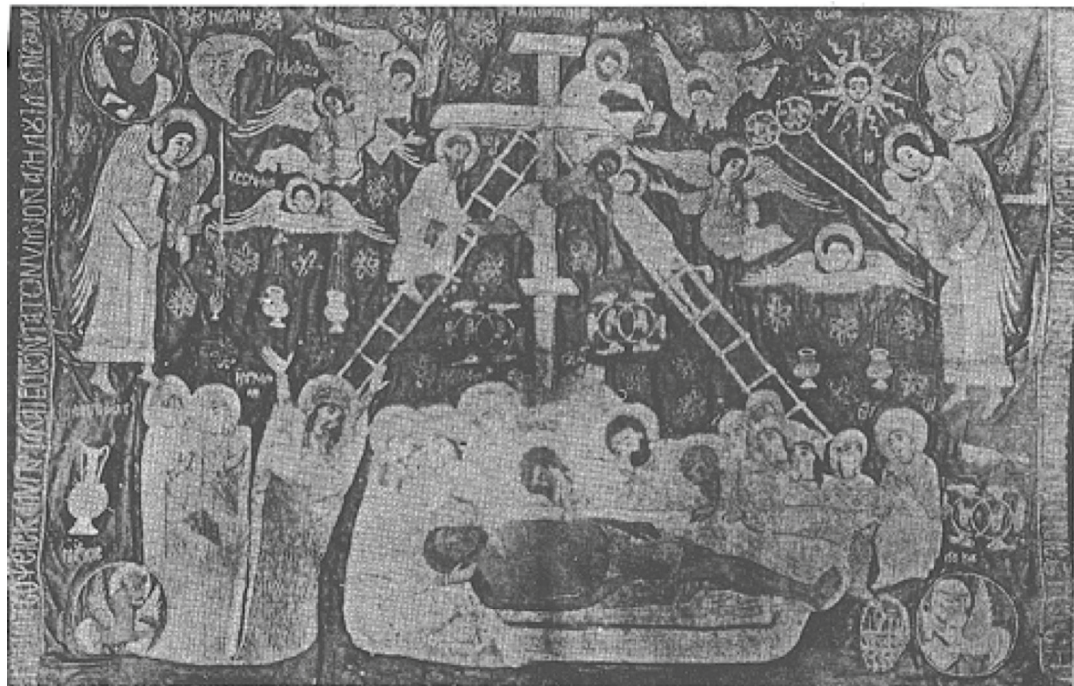


Figure 134. Epitaphios from the Church of Saint George at the Monastery of Peta near Arta. 161 x 118 cm. Athens Museum of Decorative Art. 1637 or 1647 (ΑΧΛΖ' or ΑΧΔΖ').

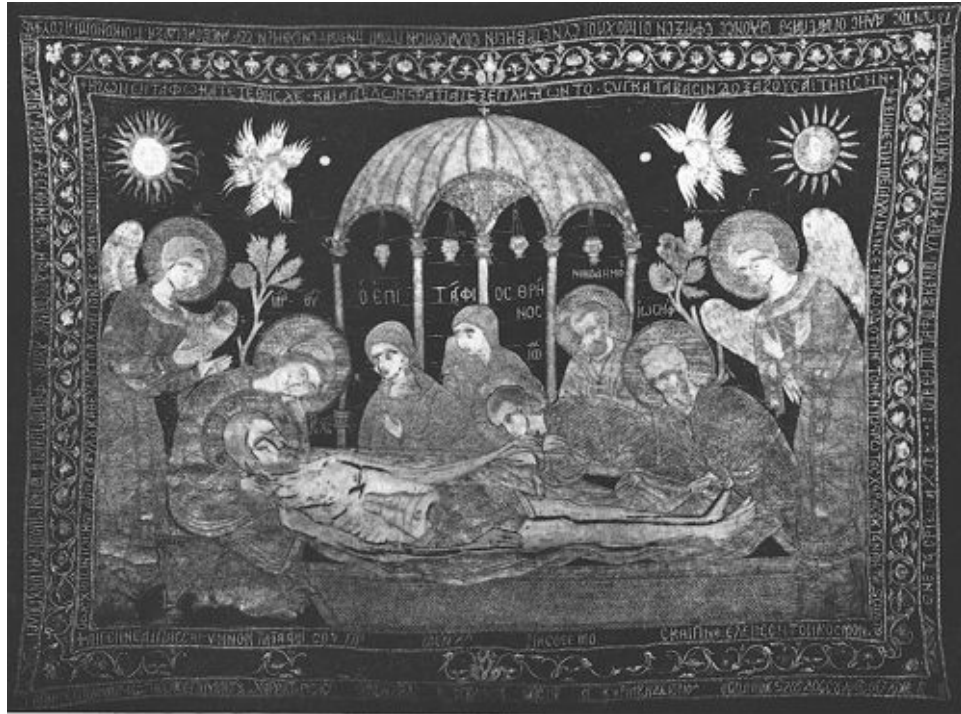


Figure 135. Epitaphios embroidered by Despoineta. 150 x 112 cm. Benaki Museum (33604). 1682.

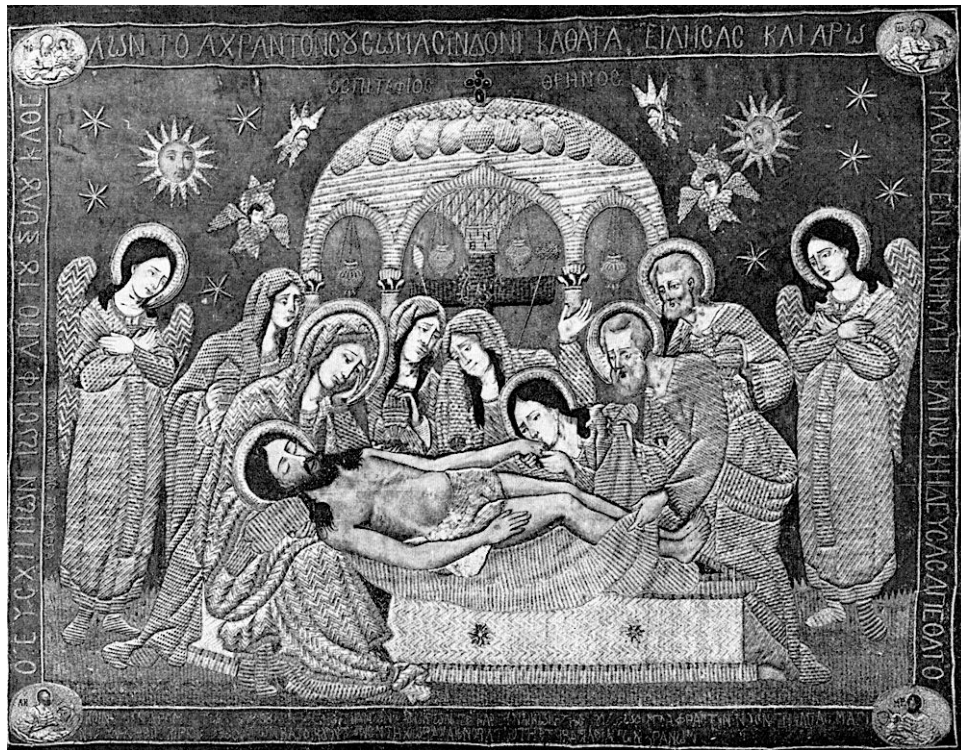


Figure 136. Kokona tou Rologa. Epitaphios. Benaki Museum, Athens. 1829.



Figure 137. The Epitaphios of Demetrios and Atalia. Canterbury Cathedral. Eighteenth Century?



Figure 138. Detail of the Epitaphios of Demetrios and Atalia showing the center panel. Canterbury Cathedral. Eighteenth Century?



Figure 139. Epitaphios designed by Christopher Žefarović. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. 1752.



Figure 140. Aër-Epitaphios. 38 x 28.5 cm. Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos. 1595.



Figure 141. Epitaphios of Queen Mariam (ca. 1632/33–1680/82). 159 x 111 cm. Georgian National Museum, Tblisi. Seventeenth Century.



Figure 142. Epitaphios of Bagrat III (1510–65). 267 x 158 cm. Georgian National Museum, Tblisi. Sixteenth Century.



Figure 143. Divine Liturgy in the dome of the katholikon at the Gelati Monastery, Georgia. Seventeenth Century.



Figure 144. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. 54.9 x 42.5. Treasure of the Patriarchate, Peć. Seventeenth Century.

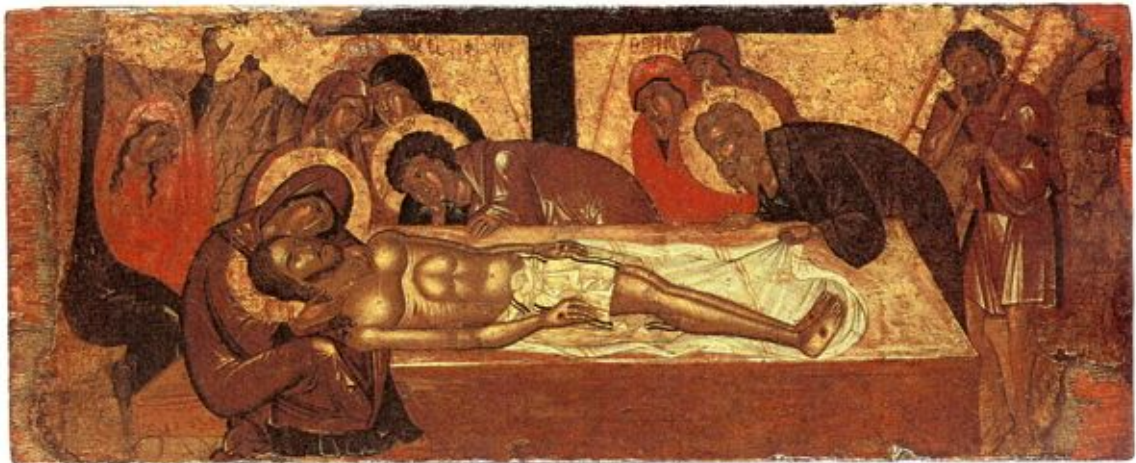


Figure 145. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. 69 x 27.7. Ecclesiastical Museum, Thera. Ca. 1500.

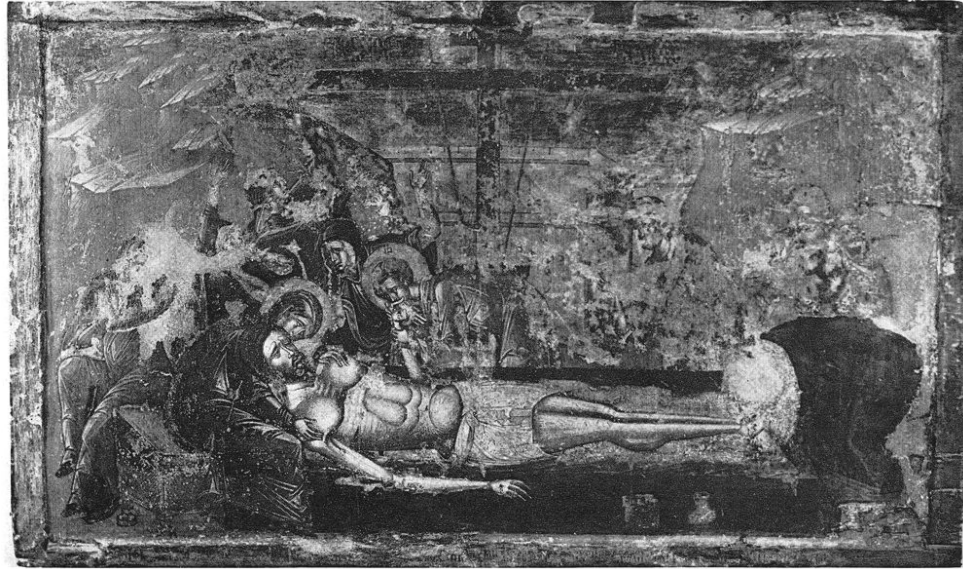


Figure 146. Icon of the Epitaphios Threnos. From the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, Wallachia. The National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. Sixteenth Century.



Figure 147. Detail of the icon of the Epitaphios Threnos from the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, Wallachia. The National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. Sixteenth Century.



Figure 148. Epitaphios of John, son of Argir and husband of and Helen. Embroidered by Roxanda. Treasury of Putna Monastery, Romania. (Tafrali's Putna 68). May 10, 1738.



Figure 149. The left side of the fresco painting of the Epitaphios Threnos from the fourteenth-century Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Mistra.

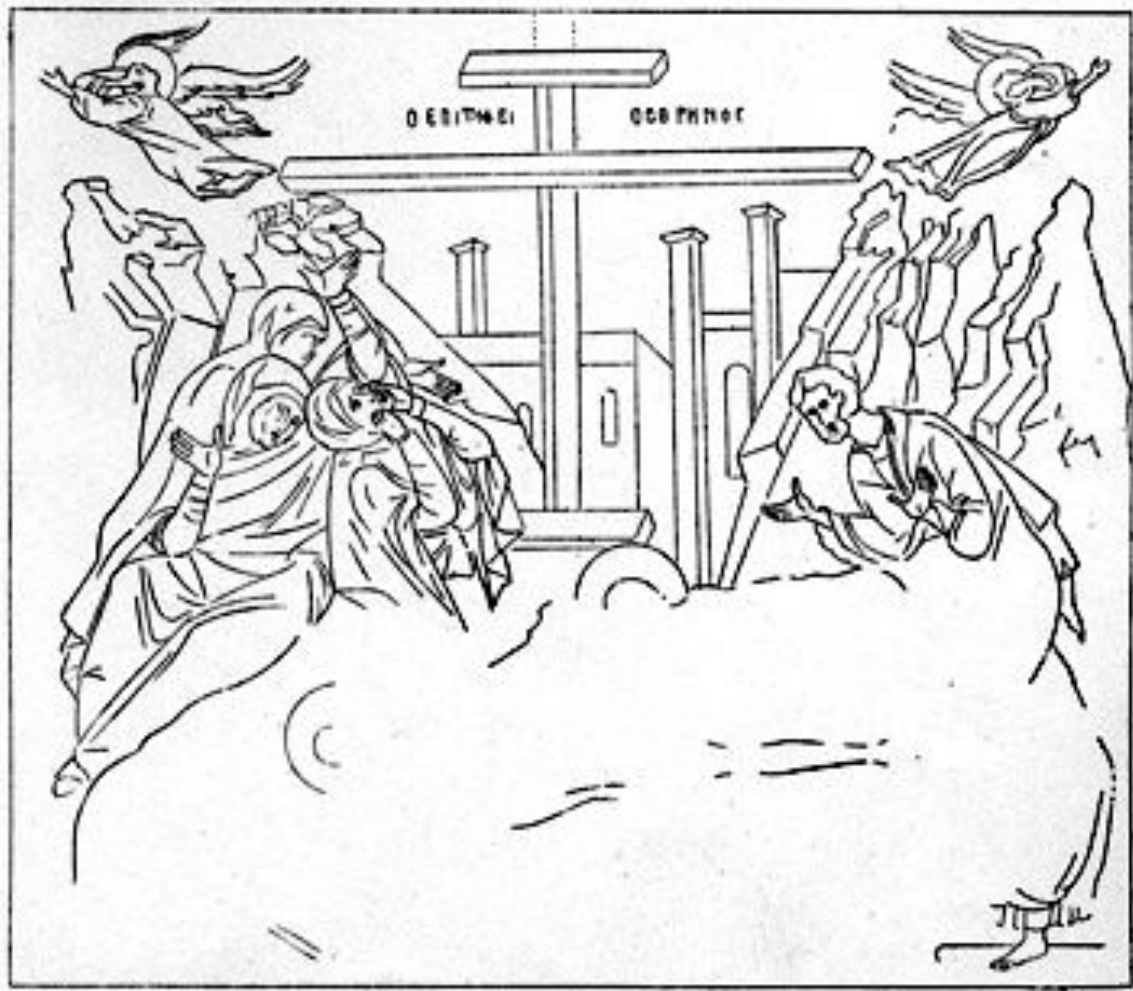


Figure 150. Gabriel Millet's line drawing of the fresco painting of the Epitaphios Threnos from the fourteenth-century Church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Mistra. Gabriel Millet. *Monuments byzantins de Mistra*. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), plate 122, 4.



Figure 151. Aër of the Voivode Neagoe Bășărab, from the Cathedral of Argeș. 207.5 x 161. Kremlin Museums, Moscow (TK-50). 1517–1519.



Figure 152. The podea of Voivode Vlad Vintilă. Wallachian Embroidery at the Koutloumisiou Monastery, Mount Athos. Ca. 1533.



Figure 153. Epitaphios worked by Despoineta and Alexandra. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 1712.



Figure 154. Catalogue Number 4. The Thessaloniki Aër-Epitaphios. Detail showing the figure of Christ on the reverse of the center panel.

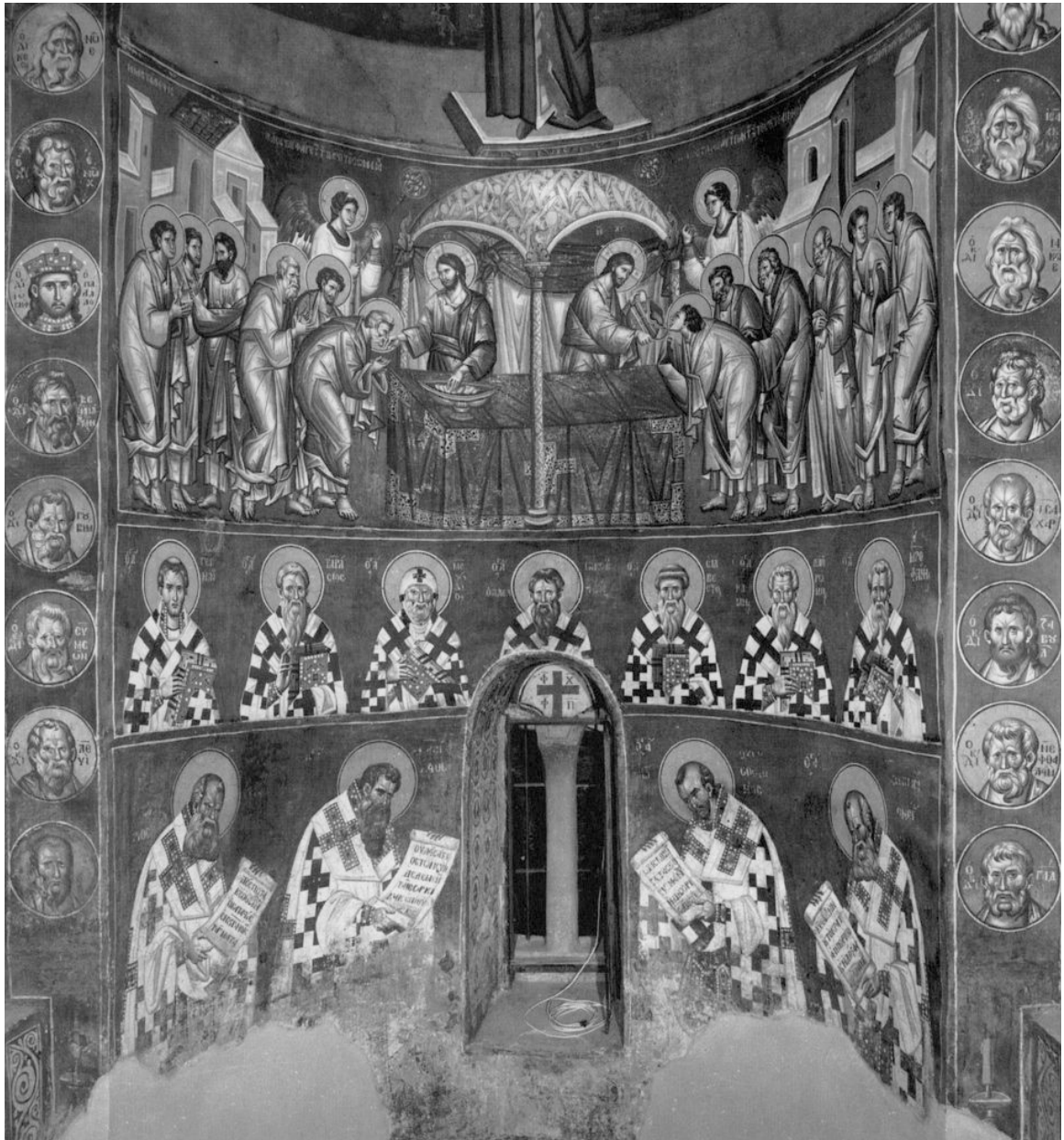


Figure 155. Communion of the Apostles (top) and Concelebrating Fathers (bottom).
Fresco in the bema of the Church of the Virgin Peribleptos (now the Church of St. Kliment), Ohrid. 1295



Figure 156. Embroidered Veil Illustrating the Transfiguration and Church Festivals from the Belozersk Monastery. 49 x 51.8 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg. Late Fifteenth Century.



Figure 157. Detail of the Embroidered Veil Illustrating the Transfiguration and Church Festivals from the Belozersk Monastery. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg. Late Fifteenth Century.

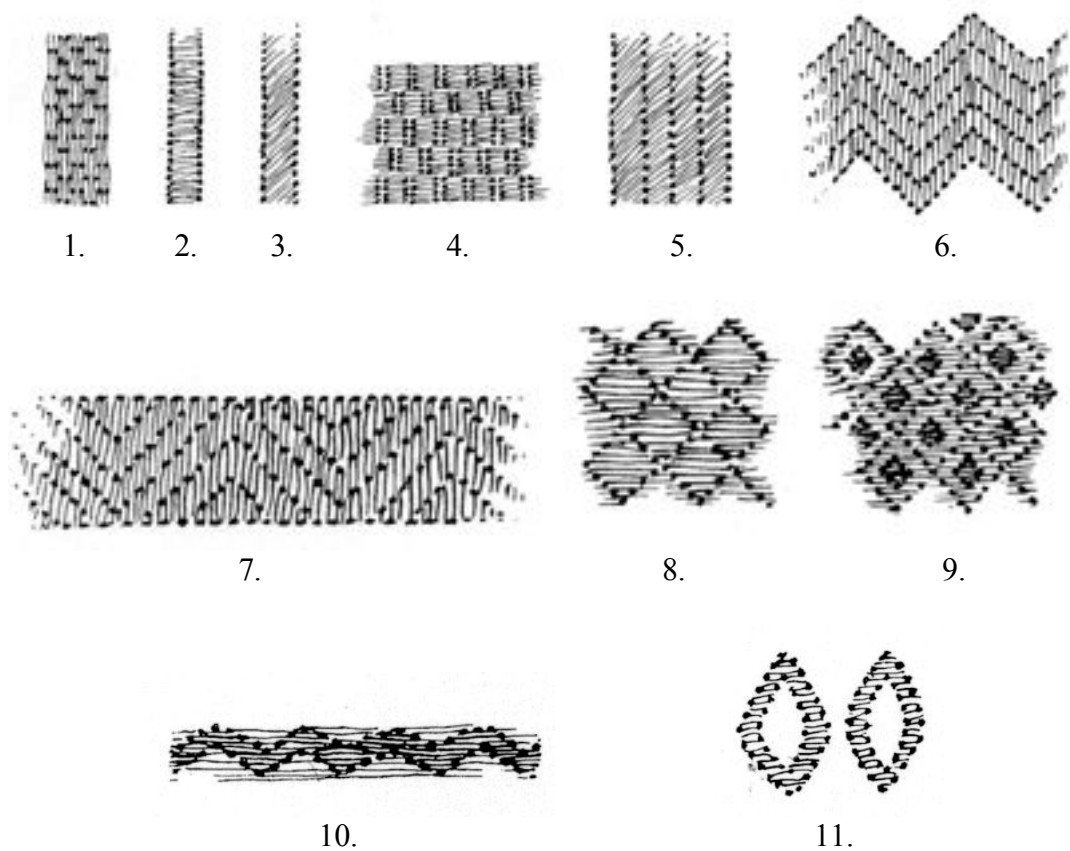


Figure 158. Couching patterns: 1. Karfoto, 2. Orthe Riza, 3. Playa Riza or Loxi Riza, 4. Isia Spaspmene, 5. Vererike, 6. Kamares, 7. Kamarakia, 8. Bakladota, 9. Kotsakia, 10. Kotsaki, 11. Amygdalo.



Figure 159. Catalogue Number 19. Detail of the Aër-Epitaphios of John and Syropoulos (Chilandar 2) showing couching patterns in the halos.



Figure 160. The Nun Ephemelia. Pall embroidered with the “Laud to Prince Lazar.” 49 x 69 cm. Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade. Ca. 1402.

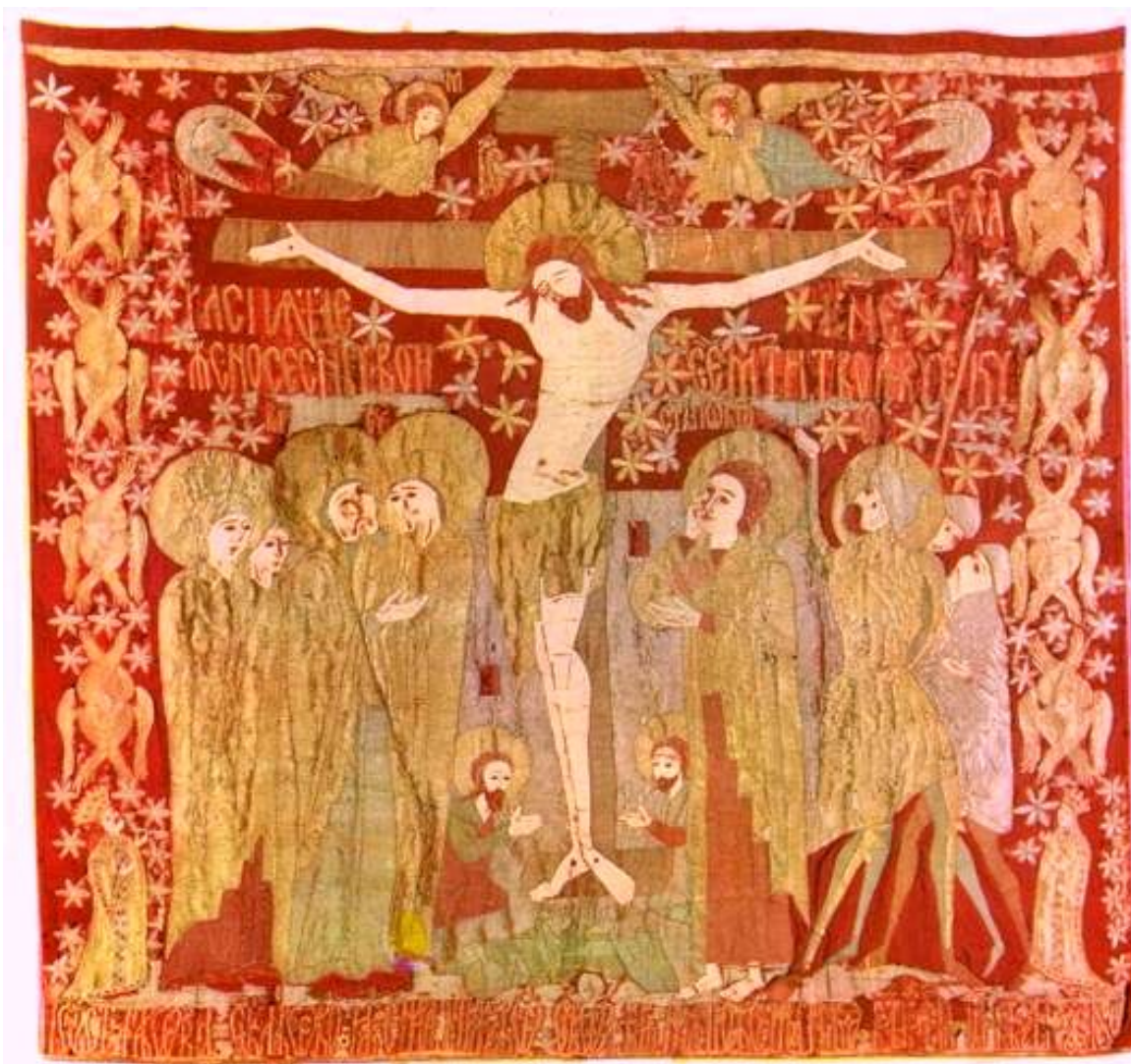


Figure 161. Curtain or hanging with the Crucifixion. 138 x 126 cm. Putna Monastery Museum, Romania. 1500.



Figure 162. Donor portrait of Ștefan cel Mare. Detail of the curtain or hanging with the Crucifixion. Putna Monastery Museum, Romania. 1500.



Figure 163. Tomb Cover of Maria Mangop. 102 x 188 cm. Treasury of Putna Monastery, Romania. Ca. 1477.



Figure 164. The Aër-Epitaphios of Gabriel Trotroushan. 210 x 165 cm. Putna Monastery, Romania. 1516.

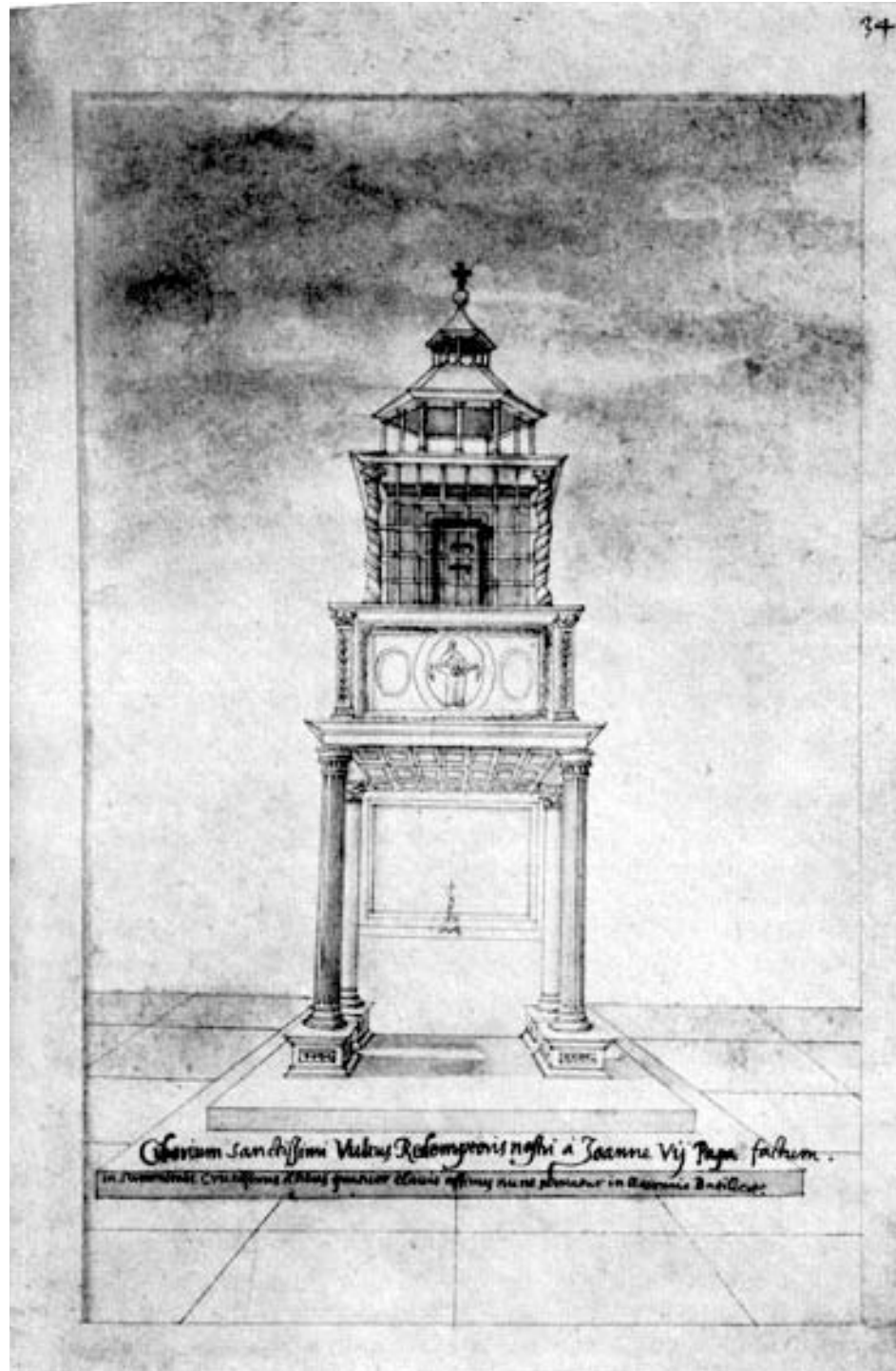


Figure 165. Ciborium of the Veronica according to Giacomo Grimaldi. *Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicae sudario ac lancea qua salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi latus patuit in vaticana basilica maxima veratione asservatis*. Vatican Library Archivio di San Pietro H. 3 (1618), f. 34.



Figure 166. Woodcut showing the “Ostension of the Sudarium” from *Mirabilis Urbis Romae*, 1481.



Figure 167. Woodcut showing the “Ostension of the Sudarium” from *Mirabilis Urbis Romae*, 1511.

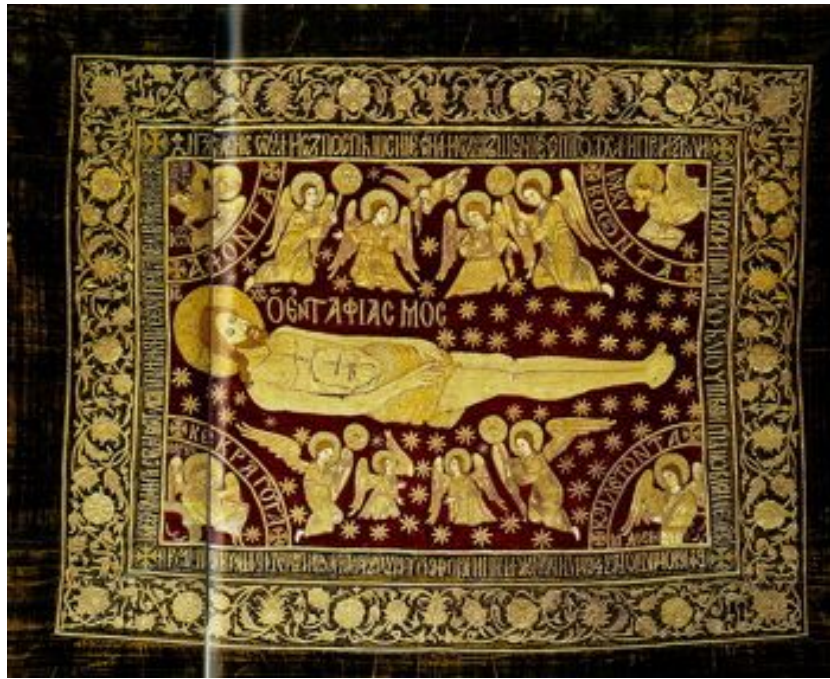


Figure 168. The Aër-Epithafios of Vasile Lupu from The Three Hierarchs Monastery, Iași. National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest. 1638.



Figure 169. Communion of the Apostles in the bema of Saint Sophia, Kiev. Ca. 1046.



Figure 170. Portraits of Alexandru cel Bun (left) and Marina (right) on the early fifteenth-century Epitrachelion of Staraya-Lagoda.



Figure 171. Detail of the Aër-Epitaphios the Princes Marina showing the omega at the beginning of the inscription.



Figure 172. Detail of the Žółkiew Aër-Epitaphios showing an omega from the lower border.

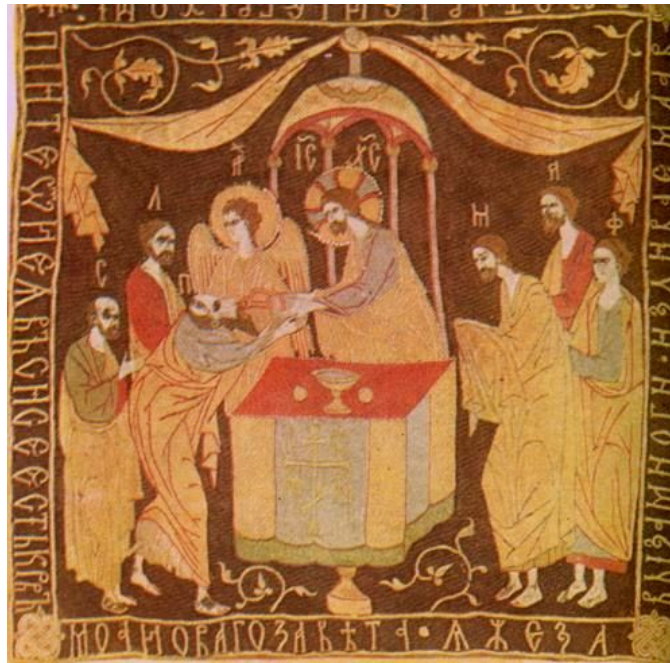


Figure 173. Poterokalymma identified by Oreste Tafrali as Putna 83 in *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).



Figure 174. Diskokalymma identified by Oreste Tafrali as Putna 84 in *Le Trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*. (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925).



Figure 175. Icon of the Entombment. 63 x 91 cm. Ostroukhov Collection, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Late Fifteenth Century.

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Education

Ph.D., Indiana University, 2009

Dissertation: "Byzantine Identity and Its Patrons: Embroidered Aëres and Epitaphioi of the Palaiologan and Post-Byzantine Periods."

M.A., Indiana University, 2001.

Masters Essay: "From Good Government to Good Taste: The 'Very Curious Genealogy' of Allan Ramsay's *A Dialogue on Taste*."

B.A., Indiana University, 1996 (With Distinction).

Teaching Experience

1997–2008 Associate Instructor, Indiana University Bloomington.

2003–2004 Associate Faculty, Herron School of Art, Indianapolis.

2001–2002 Associate Instructor, Herron School of Art, Indianapolis.

Awards and Honors

2004-2005 Student Associate Member, American School of Classical Studies in Athens, Greece.

2004 Evan F. Lilly Memorial Endowment Fellow, Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts at Indiana University.

2003 Indiana University Friends of Art grant for preliminary dissertation research.

1996 Robert E. Burke Outstanding Senior Award from the Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Arts at Indiana University.

1996 Phi Beta Kappa.

Conference and Symposium Papers

"An Unpublished, Sixteenth-Century Epitaphios in the Indiana University Art Museum," Thirty-fourth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, October 2008.

"Theater and Threnos: The Embroidered Epitaphios as an Actor in the Liturgical Drama," Thirty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Medieval Association, October 2008.

"David Hume and Medievalism in Allan Ramsay's Theory of Taste," Eighteenth International Conference on Medievalism, October 2003.

"Allan Ramsay: 'Absolute Goth.'" Thirteenth Annual Medieval Studies Symposium at Indiana University Bloomington, 2001.

"Disney's *Notre Dame*," Fourteenth International Conference on Medievalism, October 1999.

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Service

2002: Senior Editorial Advisor for *Oculus* Volume V (*Oculus* is a Journal for the History of Art published by the Art History Association at Indiana University Bloomington.)
2001: Designer of *Oculus* Volume IV.
2000: Editor of *Oculus* Volume III.
1998: Member of the editorial staff for *Oculus* Volume I.
2000–2001: Secretary of the Indiana University Bloomington Art History Association and Graduate Student Liaison to the History of Art Faculty.

Professional Organization Memberships

Byzantine Studies Association of North America
College Art Association
International Center of Medieval Art
Medieval Academy of America
The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies

Languages (reading knowledge)

Byzantine Greek
Modern Greek
German
French
Church Slavonic

Courses Taught

The following courses include only those for which I was able to write my own syllabus. I have also served as a teaching assistant (Associate Instructor) at both Indiana University Bloomington and the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI.

Indiana University Bloomington:

Sacred Space and Sacred Spectacle: The Art of the Byzantine Church
Survey of Ancient through Medieval Art
Survey of Renaissance through Modern Art
Art Appreciation

Herron School of Art and Design:

Byzantine Art
Romanesque and Gothic Art
Survey of Ancient through Medieval Art
Survey of Renaissance through Modern Art
Art Appreciation

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Other Work Experience

1994–2007 Announcer, WFIU 103.7 FM, Bloomington, Indiana.

1994–1997 Freelance videographer.

1991–1993 Announcer and Producer, WSVH 91.1 FM, Savannah, Georgia.

At WSVH, I was responsible for locally produced classical music programming.
I also wrote, produced, and hosted a weekly series about twentieth-century music.

1985–1990 Medical Materiel Specialist, U.S. Air Force. Honorable Discharge at the rank of Sergeant.

Travel

2004–2005 I lived in Athens, Greece while a Student Associate Member at the American School of Classical Studies. In addition to traveling to other cities in Greece, including Thessaloniki, I was able to visit several of the monasteries of Mount Athos.

2005 I traveled to several cities and sites in Romania including monasteries in Moldavia.

1999 I worked as a volunteer at an archeological dig at Tel Tanninim, Israel. I also visited Istanbul, Turkey, and traveled to several sites in Egypt, including the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Sinai.

I have also traveled in England, Ireland, France, Spain, Morocco, the Czech Republic, and Austria.